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U.S. manufacturing contracts; private payrolls post first drop since 2017



Inside C2

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‘China poisoned our people,’ says campaign ad from Houston candidate for Congress Kathaleen Wall



Kathaleen Wall, a candidate for the 22nd Congressional District, talks during the candidate forum hosted by the Greater Katy Area Republicans Thursday, Jan. 16, 2020, at Gallery Furniture, 7227 W Grand Pkwy. S., in Richmond.
Photo: Melissa Phillip, Houston Chronicle / Staff

Jeremy Wallace

(Houston/ Chronicle)

Republican congressional candidate Kathaleen Wall is using the coronavirus outbreak as the centerpiece for a new campaign ad airing in the Houston media market. “China poisoned our people,” a narrator says in the ad, which then lauds President Donald Trump for calling COVID-19 the “Chinese virus.” “Wall will cut off trade, aid, and support to China,” the narrator says. “China is a criminal enterprise masquerading as a sovereign nation.” Wall is hardly alone in trying to place blame for the coronavirus outbreak on China. Other Texas Republicans including U.S. Sens John Cornyn and Ted Cruz have pinned blame on China for their mishandling of the virus at the start of the outbreak. “It’s no coincidence China’s been the source of most of these contagions breaking out — SARS, MERS, the swine flu — because of some of the cultural practices there,” Cornyn said in mid-March in which he pinpointed exotic markets in China where bats and snakes are served. Unlimited Digital Access for as little as 95¢ Read more articles like this by subscribing to the Houston Chronicle Cornyn’s statement was rated False by the independent

fact-checking group PolitiFact. During an interview on KFYO radio in Lubbock, Cruz made clear China “bears enormous responsibility” for letting the pandemic get out of control. “For months they tried to keep it secret,” Cruz said. Wall’s ad is airing as she donates portable hand sanitizers to the Houston Police Officers Union. In a picture of the donation posted on her Twitter page, the hand sanitizers have a “Made in China” label on them. Wall is running for the 22nd Congressional District, which includes most of Fort Bend County and portions of Brazoria and Harris counties. She and former Fort Bend County Sheriff Troy Nehls are battling in a Republican Primary runoff now scheduled for July 14. Nehls won 40 percent of the vote during the March 3 Republican primary to Wall’s 19 percent. The race was forced into a runoff because no candidate hit 50 percent of the vote. Democrat Sri Preston Kulkarni will face the winner in November in the general election. He was quick to blast Wall’s ad. “Irresponsible, race-baiting comments like these from Kathaleen Wall are unacceptable and dangerous to TX-22’s large Asian American and Pacific Islander population, who are intimately aware of the FBI warning about the recent surge of hate crimes against their community,” Kulkarni said. The candidates are battling to replace U.S. Rep. Pete Olson, R-Sugar Land, who announced in 2019 he would not seek re-election. In 2018, Olson won re-election but by just 5 percentage points, leading Democrats to make the race one of their top targets in the 2020 elections.tracting COVID-19.

Related News

Fort Bend County District Attorney Brian Middleton targeted hate crimes against Asian-Americans in a statement released Thursday, hours after Fort Bend GOP Congressional candidate Kathaleen Wall put out a TV ad claiming “China poisoned our people” and praising President Donald Trump for calling COVID-19 the “Chinese virus” - a name the president has since stopped using.

“The hate incidents targeting Asian-Americans in other parts of our country will not be tolerated in Fort Bend County,” Middleton said in the statement. “In fact, crimes targeting anyone because of who they are violate the promise of freedom and personal dignity this country stands for. Convictions for hate crimes also face enhanced punishments.”

Middleton also said children and other vulnerable people are at a higher risk of violence during the pandemic, specifically because of the regions many stay-at-home-style orders, a sentiment echoed by leaders in Harris County.



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New York state’s COVID-19 death toll nears 9/11 level

NEW YORK (Reuters) - New York state recorded more than 500 coronavirus-related deaths in a single day, bringing its total to nearly 3,000, or about the same number killed in the United States in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, Governor Andrew Cuomo said on Friday.

A member of the hospital staff cleans the door at Mount Sinai Hospital, during the outbreak coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in New York City, U.S., April 3, 2020. REUTERS/Brendan McDermid
New York City has mere days to prepare for the worst of the novel coronavirus onslaught, said Mayor Bill de Blasio, whose city has suffered more than a quarter of U.S. deaths in the outbreak. He pleaded for federal government help to end a shortage of medical staff and ventilators.

“I think somehow in Washington, there’s an assumption (that) there’s weeks to prepare,” de Blasio said on MSNBC. “There’s not weeks anymore. It is days now.”

The 24-hour death toll was 562, raising the New York state total to 2,935 fatalities, Cuomo said. He called it the “highest single increase in the number of deaths since we started.”

The Sept. 11 attacks killed nearly 3,000 people, most of them at New York City’s World Trade Center. De Blasio is asking for 1,000 nurses, 150 doctors and 300 respiratory therapists as the number of COVID-19 cases in the city is expected to rise sharply next week. New York City has yet to receive a resupply for the up to 3,000 ventilators needed by next week, de Blasio said, urging President Donald Trump to mobilize medical personnel from the U.S. military. “They are not mobilized for action,” de Blasio, a Democrat, told WNYC radio. “The president has to give that order right now.” Trump is a Republican.

More than 25% of the 6,058 U.S. coronavirus deaths tallied by Johns Hopkins University as of Friday morning



A member of the hospital staff cleans the door at Mount Sinai Hospital, during the outbreak coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in New York City, U.S., April 3, 2020. REUTERS/Brendan McDermid

were in New York City. Infections in the United States totaling 240,000 account for about 24% of the more than 1 million cases worldwide. Many of the fatal victims were dying alone as medical staff forbade relatives to be with them in their final hours for fear of a further spread of infection. “There’s really no way to describe what we’re seeing. Our new reality is unreal,” Craig Spencer, the director of global health in emergency medicine at New York’s Columbia University medical center, wrote on

Twitter on Thursday night. He described tents set up outside hospitals to help contain an increasing influx of patients. “In those same tents, I saw too much pain, loneliness, and death. People dying alone.” In neighboring New Jersey, Governor Phil Murphy ordered that all flags be lowered to half-staff for as long as the emergency remains in effect to honor those lost to the coronavirus. He said New Jersey, which has more than 29,000

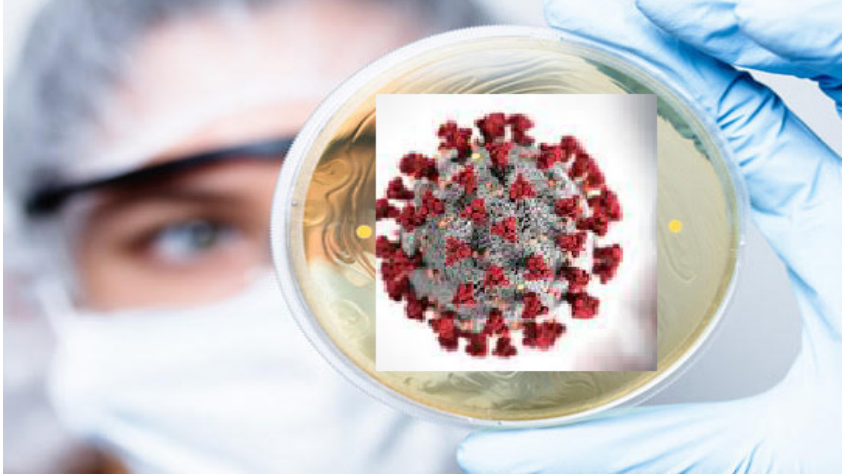
cases, was the first state to take such a measure. New York City and state have both complained that federal resources have not reached them quickly enough, but Cuomo said Trump responded swiftly to a request he made on Thursday that a makeshift hospital at a Manhattan convention center be allowed to take in patients with the COVID-19 disease. Initially it was set up to treat all other patients.

Stay home!

BUSINESS

Work safe!

Joint Open Letter From World Political Parties Pledging Closer International Cooperation Against COVID-19



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

BEIJING, April 2 (Xinhua) -- The Communist Party of China and more than 230 political parties from over 100 countries issued a joint open letter last Thursday calling for carrying out closer joint international cooperation to beat COVID-19. This is the first joint appeal of major world political parties for strengthening international cooperation since the COVID-19 outbreak. The following is the full text of the joint open letter:

#

A JOINT OPEN LETTER FROM WORLD POLITICAL PARTIES CONCERNING CLOSER INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGAINST COVID-19

Today, as COVID-19 is spreading rapidly across the globe, it constitutes the most urgent and serious challenge to both the health of the humanity and world peace and development. Faced with this unprecedented situation, we, major political parties of various countries tasked with the weighty responsibility of improving people’s wellbeing, promoting national development and safeguarding world peace and

stability, hereby issue our joint appeal as follows:

I. We pay our loftiest tribute to all the people, health workers in particular, who devote themselves to saving lives and protecting people’s health. We extend our heartfelt sympathies and solicitude to those who are suffering from pain and whose lives are under the threat of COVID-19 as well as the bereaved families of those deceased. We also express our deep mourning for the unfortunate loss of lives in the outbreak.

II. We recognise that if the COVID-19 outbreak is not effectively and promptly contained, it will inflict even greater harm to the lives, safety and health of many more people, and exert a severe impact on the economic and social development of most countries as well as on international exchanges and cooperation. We call on all countries to put the lives, safety and health of the people above everything

else and take resolute and forceful measures to put an end to the spread of COVID-19.

III. We support countries to put in place contingency plans and strategies for combating COVID-19 in light of their specific national conditions and to strengthen cooperation, with equal emphasis on containing the further spread and on patient treatment. Meanwhile, modern science and technology must be applied to the full to ensure the quickest and best possible results.

IV. We call on the general public of all countries to comply with prevention and mitigation measures with a due sense of social responsibility. We encourage countries to fully leverage the strength of civil society organisations and volunteers with a view to unleashing the power of all social sectors to combat COVID-19.

V. We encourage all countries, while devoting efforts to epidemic control, to adopt an integrated approach to ensure economic and social development, take targeted measures to protect vulnerable groups and the SMEs, and honour their commitment to people’s living standards and social progress. We call on all countries to step up the international coordination of macroeconomic policies to maintain stability of global financial market as well as that of industrial and supply chains, and to reduce or exempt tariffs for trade facilitation so as to prevent world economic recession. Countries are also encouraged to maintain an appropriate level of international exchanges, in particular to facilitate the cross-border transportation of urgently needed medical equipment and protective materials for the fight against COVID-19.



VI. We are aware that the virus respects no borders, and no country can respond

to the challenges alone in the face of the outbreak. Countries must enhance their consciousness of a community with a shared future for mankind, proactively rendering mutual help and support to one another as the situation becomes more difficult. Closer international cooperation, coordinated policies, concerted actions, and mobilisation of resources and forces globally will enable us to defeat this virus, a common enemy to all of humanity.

VII. We take note of the significant progress in the fight against COVID-19 in China and some other countries, which has bought time and offered experience to the rest of the international community. We highly commend countries including China for adopting an open, transparent and responsible attitude to disclosing related information in a timely fashion, sharing experience on response and patient treatment, and in particular providing medical and other supplies to the best of their ability to other affected countries. These represent a major contribution to the global fight against COVID-19, boosting the hope and confidence of countries that they can win this battle.

VIII. We welcome the Extraordinary G20 Leaders’ Summit Statement on COVID-19 and support countries to strengthen the sharing of experience and medical cooperation in containing the outbreak, including joint research and development of specific medicines, vaccines and tests. We call on the provision of material, technical and other support to developing countries and countries with vulnerable public health systems. Let the sunlight of cooperation disperse the darkness of the pandemic

IX. We call for science-based professional discussions on issues like prevention measures and the origin of the virus. We strongly oppose the politicization of public health issues and the stigmatisation of other countries under the excuse of COVID-19. We stand firmly against all discriminatory comments and practices against any country, region or ethnic group, and call

on governments of all countries to take proactive measures to protect the health, safety and legitimate interests of foreign nationals and students they host.

X. We are of the view that the COVID-19 outbreak has laid bare the need for all countries to further foster the global governance outlook of achieving shared growth through discussion and collaboration and to support the leading role of the United Nations and the World Health Organisation in global public health governance. We call for all parties to enhance coordination and cooperation within the framework of the G20 and other international mechanisms for effective international prevention and control as we strive to build a global community with a shared future for public health.



As major political parties from countries of the world, we undertake to maintain close communication and collaboration under the unusual circumstances, and ensure better performance of the due role of political guidance for the purpose of injecting political energy into the global fight against COVID-19. We firmly believe that our current difficulties are only temporary, just as the sunlight shall eventually shine after each storm. If the international community makes concerted efforts with confidence and resolve and takes a science-based and targeted approach, it will definitely win the final victory in the all-out global war against COVID-19. It is our belief that, after the pandemic, the community with a shared future for mankind will emerge stronger and humanity will embrace a brighter tomorrow. (Courtesy <http://www.xinhuanet.com/english>)

Editor's Choice



Employee Beth Pershing disinfects the front door as Each Peach Market closes on the first day of new coronavirus protocols in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood of Washington, U.S., April 2, 2020. REUTERS/Erin Scott



Each Peach Market employee Joachim Trinh fulfills increased grocery pickup orders on the first day of new coronavirus protocols in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood of Washington, U.S., April 2, 2020. REUTERS/Erin Scott



People wait for a bus before a repatriation flight bound for France organized by the French embassy for citizens stranded in Peru, as the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) continues, in Lima, Peru April 3, 2020. REUTERS/Sebastian Castaneda NO RESALES. NO ARCHIVES



Captain Brett Crozier, commanding officer of the U.S. Navy aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, welcomes college football teams in the ship's hangar bay K during an event in San Diego, California, U.S. December 24, 2019. Picture taken December 24, 2019. U.S. Navy/Mass



The showcase of a souvenir-shop displays a protective gear at the famous red-light district "Reeperbahn" during the outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Hamburg



French citizens wait a chartered evacuation flight due to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) at the Augusto C.Sandino International airport in Managua, Nicaragua April 3, 2020. REUTERS/Oswaldo Rivas



A view of One World Trade Center and Manhattan from The Green-Wood Cemetery, during the outbreak coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the Brooklyn, New York



Each Peach Market general manager Eleanor Gease disinfects the checkout area on the first day of new coronavirus protocols in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood of Washington, U.S., April 2, 2020. REUTERS/Erin Scott

COMMUNITY

Disaster-Scarred City Now Facing Explosive Virus Outbreak

Coronavirus Is Ravaging New Orleans



Southern Louisiana is no stranger to disasters and sudden loss of life. (Photo/ Getty Images)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

The region still bears the scars of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the 2010 BP oil spill and Baton Rouge’s catastrophic flooding in 2016. Now the region finds itself a hotspot of the coronavirus pandemic. As of Tuesday night, the state recorded 5,237 COVID-19 cases and 239 deaths. The numbers are expected to spike further as Gov. John Bel Edwards recently noted Louisiana was experiencing “the fastest growth rate of confirmed cases in the world.” Many of those deaths occurred in and around New Orleans. As the city’s convention center is converted to a make-shift hospital and the municipality awaits federal aid, residents see similarities to disasters of the past as well as factors making this crisis unique and unfamiliar. “COVID-19 is like Katrina in slow motion,” says Peter Breen, owner of a New Orleans barbecue restaurant he

co-founded with his wife in 2004. Breen says it was six weeks before he could reopen after the hurricane. He recalls the business survived and eventually grew by catering to a nearby naval base and volunteers arriving in town to rebuild. The COVID-19 pandemic feels different, he says. “This time we have a growing threat with no identifiable end point. Business is down and I expect that to continue until whenever it is we get some good news.”



Unique to New Orleans
City officials announced on Tuesday they expect New Orleans’ death rate

to reach 5% of all local confirmed COVID-19 cases. This far exceeds the average rate across the United States of less than 2%. “Our economy revolves around people gathering in the public space,” explains Richard Campanella, a geographer, author and professor at Tulane University, “whether that be festivals, music clubs, the restaurant scene or second-lines [large parades].” The city’s world-famous Mardi Gras celebration attracts more than one million visitors each year and brings together hundreds of thousands of local residents. The festivities were held as usual this year, extending through most of February, precisely when the coronavirus was taking a foothold in America.



Once spreading in the city, New Orleans is proving to be especially vulnerable. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that diabetes and heart disease increase the risk of severe COVID-19 illness, and New Orleans has higher rates of both conditions than the national average. Socio-economic factors also play a role. “We’re a city with a high rate of poverty, and that can sometimes lead to these underlying health issues because of less access to quality foods and proper healthcare,” says Mollie Pate, a gym owner and local musician. “Now we’re seeing people with those health issues are most likely to be impacted.” **Struggling economy** In addition to a health emergency, COVID-19 is taking a devastating economic toll as tourism disappears and employers lay off workers, says United Way of Southeast Louisiana CEO Michael Williamson.

“A large majority of these positions (hospitality and tourism) pay low wages,” Williamson says, “leaving households with little savings to weather a crisis like losing a job during COVID-19.”



United Way has sprung to action, creating the Hospitality Cares Pandemic Response Fund. The program provides grants to hospitality workers in the area unable to cover basic needs during the emergency. The application launched last week and elicited a flood of applications, more than 2,000 in a matter of hours, forcing a temporary suspension of the program while applications were processed and additional funds were raised. Meanwhile, local workers continue to struggle. “The current crisis has decimated my income,” says Kelcy Mae Wilburn, a musician in the New Orleans band Ever More Nest, as well as a writer. “The local publisher I’ve worked for had to drop my freelance services, and months of my band’s performances have been cancelled or postponed. It’s a lot to overcome, and so many in New Orleans are affected in similar ways.” **Déjà vu or welcome change?** Like other cities and townships across the country, New Orleans waits for promised relief from the federal government to help mitigate the growing crisis. Officials say aid can’t come soon enough. Gov. Edwards announced Louisiana was offered 150 additional ventilators for hospitals this week by the Strategic National Stockpile, far short of the 5,000 the governor requested. The state says it may no longer have enough ventilators for critically ill patients by April 4.



Local businesses and individuals also await assistance from the \$2 trillion stimulus package President Trump signed into law last week. The legislation will provide additional unemployment benefits for affected workers and loans for impacted businesses. For many in New Orleans, empty streets, closed stores, ad-hoc schooling, massive layoffs and the government’s commandeering of the convention center bring back memories of Hurricane Katrina’s aftermath, when federal aid came notoriously late as the city’s death toll rose and scenes of frantic desperation abounded. Some in the city say they are hesitant to count on federal assistance again. What will people do when this aid runs out? We’ll wait until it’s safe, of course, but I think we’re all just eager to get back to work.” (Courtesy Info Wars and Voice of America)



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