

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 323 TRANSCRIPT

Steve Skrovan: It's the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*.

♪ Stand up, stand up. You've been sitting way too long ♪

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my cohost, David Feldman. Hello, David.

David Feldman: Good morning.

Steve Skrovan: Good to have you with us, and the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello, everybody. Trump accountability and saving the U.S. Postal Service.

Steve Skrovan: That's right. We've got a full show on both those topics. Sometime last week, a new billboard went up in New York City's Times Square. The billboard is titled the The Trump Death Clock. It keeps track of the estimated deaths that could have been prevented if the United States had shut down just a week earlier. The clock currently counts over 50,000 preventable deaths that occurred due to that one single week of inaction. The creator of this clock is filmmaker, Eugene Jarecki, who is an Emmy and Peabody award-winning director of both dramatic and documentary subjects. He has twice won the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival for his takedown to the military industrial complex. That film was called, *Why We Fight*, and he won again for a film about criminal justice and drug policy entitled *The House I Live In*. We're going to find out what inspired him to put up this ticker that resembles the National Debt Clock, which is also in Times Square.

A few weeks ago, we highlighted the essential work nurses have been doing on the front lines of this pandemic when Director of National Nurses United, Jean Ross, came on the show. She spoke about the lack of protective equipment nurses have been receiving. Today, we spotlight another line of essential workers. For many of us right now, the U.S. Mail is one of our few connections to the outside world: food, medications, and other essential goods are being delivered in ever-increasing quantities by the Postal Service, and postal workers have been risking their lives to deliver these things.

Despite our increasing dependence on the Postal Service, the United States Postal Service may run out of money this fall, and it appears that President Trump has no interest in saving it. Here to talk about this in the second half of the show will be Mark Dimondstein, who is the President of the American Postal Workers Union. Somewhere in between, we'll take a short break and check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber, and if we have some time left over, we'll try to answer some listener questions. First, let's talk about how one person set out to enumerate, in lives lost, the consequences of reckless leadership. David?

David Feldman: Eugene Jarecki is an Emmy and Peabody award-winning director of dramatic and documentary subjects. Mr. Jarecki combines the skills of a journalist and poet in his documentaries. His work is motivated by his outrage at corruption, exploitation, and injustice in

contemporary life. Mr. Jarecki created the Trump Death Clock, which documents the estimated U.S. COVID-19 deaths due to President Trump's inaction. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Eugene Jarecki.

Eugene Jarecki: I'm delighted to be here.

Ralph Nader: Welcome, Eugene. Tell us why you decided to erect this 50-foot or higher Trump Death Clock in Times Square, clearly the most recognized location in America, and it's been up for several days now. Tell us what brought you to think about this and what you think it will do.

Eugene Jarecki: Thank you so much for asking. I'm a New Yorker, and all my life, I've been very moved by the National Debt Clock, which hangs in New York City, and it symbolizes something, which is the danger of America's reckless borrowing. If you live in New York or you're a tourist in New York, everybody, at one time or another, crosses paths with this Debt Clock, which hangs on the wall and warns about the future grave consequences of reckless borrowing.

As the pandemic struck, and I saw the recklessness, the reckless disregard for human life that President Trump and his team engaged in in dismissing the virus, calling it a hoax, playing political games, engaging in inaction despite the desperate efforts of experts and even the intelligence services [comprised of 17 agencies] to demand action, it seemed to me that we needed an instrument for accountability and an instrument to demonstrate that that kind of recklessness has a great cost, just like reckless borrowing has a great cost. I wanted to symbolize the human cost of reckless pandemic leadership, and that meant we had to come up with a formula, a calculation, because we all know that, now, we get 80,000 deaths and we're headed for 100,000 deaths overall in this pandemic. But you have to figure out for what is the president and his team specifically accountable. That is a calculation that has to be very conservative and very careful so it doesn't just get caught in the shouting match that's going on between people, and on the pundits, and on the television shows.

Ralph Nader: You did it very, very conservatively. Explain to our listeners how you did it.

Eugene Jarecki: Sure. The president and his defenders do what the president always does, which is when he's under attack, he deflects; he attacks the critics; he distracts; he dissembles. He and his defenders want to say, well, it was China's fault, or it was the WHO's [World Health Organization] fault, or it was this individual or that, so that's what they're going to engage in. His detractors, they're going to engage in the act of saying well, we think he's guilty for much more. We think it goes back to 2018 when he dismissed the pandemic director within the National Security Council, and we also know that in January, 12 times in his Presidential Daily Brief, we see the intelligence services warning him that he needs to engage in preventative action. They want to point to that and say, well, if you reach back there, many more deaths should be laid at his door. All of that is stuff that reasonable people can discuss, and frankly, they can discuss it until they become unreasonable. What we wanted to find, mathematically, was sort of like charging Al Capone with tax evasion. We wanted to figure out if you were going to a courtroom about this, what is the part of the whole story that is beyond dispute, beyond reasonable doubt? We saw, from the leading epidemiologists, doctors Jewell and Jewell, who wrote a very seminal piece in the *New York Times* in the middle of April, what they said was there is a one-week period that, beyond dispute, had the country

instituted mitigation guidelines on March 9th, rather than a week later when the president announced them on March 16th, that one week would have saved 60% of American lives. That puts such a huge amount of accountability at the door of Trump and his team that we felt it was sufficient, it was symbolic to suggest, A) that he and they must be held to account, and B) it gives you the authority of the numbers to demand more responsible and responsive leadership, going forward.

Ralph Nader: What does accountability really mean, short of demanding resignation or impeachment? After all, his performance on the COVID crisis has been flailing, delusionary, erratic, chaotic, confused, self-contradictory, ego-obsessed. We're dealing here with an unstable personality, to put it mildly. I mean Captain Queeg, Captain Bligh,

Eugene Jarecki: Ahab.

Ralph Nader: whatever metaphor you want on the Ship of State. What do you mean, Eugene Jarecki, when you say "accountability"?

Eugene Jarecki: Sure. I think, in the immediate, accountability is a matter of in the court of public opinion, and therefore, in an election year, at the ballot box. So let's say President Trump sees the Trump Death Clock hanging over Times Square in his hometown and it shakes him to his core, and he thinks, my god, look at my legacy; I've got to fix this. Well, he might step up and start to conduct himself like a president whose job is to care for the American people. That would mean he would value what experts who spend their entire careers thinking about in defense of people; he would trust them to guide him; he would integrate science into public policy; he would stop playing political games. He would see a larger purpose here. So, in the court of public opinion, the bad view of him that this clock will promote and help support among lots of bad views we get every day, hopefully, those will send the message [that] you need to lead better, and of course, everyone will roll their eyes. He might get the memo and think, I should do that. If he does that, then that might go well for him, and the public, I think, would appreciate that. If he doesn't do that, I think someone else will step into his office and be elected to show more responsible leadership to the American public at a time of crisis. So, accountability, listen, we are not a court of law, and everyone deserves due process, and you cannot lay at his feet, you killed these people. You can't do that, because among other things, contrary to his opinion, he is not a despot. He could not, from his even bully pulpit, say to you, you must mitigate, and you do it, because he's not a dictator. He can't dictate our behavior, so it's much more accurate to say, the president is entrusted with the care of the American people and to defend the nation from threats from within and without, and he fails to do that here! He made a political bet that calling it a hoax and playing games with it would serve him well, and as we have now seen in the numbers both in who we've lost and in their families who are mourning them, and that it's all over the country of his supporters as well, it was a bad

political bet for which the nation is paying a huge price. So, that's where accountability will lay. It's the accountability of reckless endangerment that led to reckless manslaughter.

Ralph Nader: You've made that very clear. The website, by the way, listeners, is trumpdeathclock.com. When did it go up, what's been the news coverage, what's been the popular reaction to it?

Eugene Jarecki: The site went up on Friday, so it's just a few days old, and that's where it went up in Times Square. Today, this morning, in the last hour, I have to tell you, we hit the milestone of 50,000 dead. There are 50,000 lives needlessly lost currently on the clock when you go to trumpdeathclock.com, and I imagine by the time your listeners go there, it'll be up even above that because, of course, it just slowly and painfully ticks upward because of 60% of the ongoing death toll. The reaction has been very, very strong. We've had 300,000 visitors to the site, meaning to the website in just the last few days that it's been up. [In] Times Square, not so many visitors because there's nobody in Times Square, which is part of why it was possible to do it as a billboard. Because for anyone listening, we want people to bring the Trump Death Clock to their home town. We want them to project it on their house, on their school, on a building, put it on a billboard. Billboard space around the country right now is cheap as a song, so a small community, you can pull together and put up a billboard that reminds your community of how this reckless disregard has hurt you, and how it is an insult to what should have been done towards you. That reaction we've been getting from the public is very strong. We've had hundreds of email inquiries sent to our email, which I can provide people if they'd like to contact us.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, go ahead, why don't you give them the email, and do you have guidelines on how people in towns all over the country can do this with a projection?

Eugene Jarecki: We do. People email us and we help them do it. We actually give them the materials, the assets they would need to project or to put into billboard form, and then we help them with the sort of steps that we had to go through. We help them know how to do those, and in some cases, if people need help, we'll advise them about getting crowd-funding and things like that. The website is deathclock2020@gmail.com.

Ralph Nader: Say that again, slowly.

Eugene Jarecki: deathclock2020@gmail.com

Ralph Nader: There you are. Has Trump responded to it, and what about the *New York Times*' strange lack of coverage almost 10 days after it went up in Times Square, which is in their backyard?

Eugene Jarecki: Yeah, the *New York Times* has not covered it. Apparently, it may not be news that's fit to print. The *Daily News* has not covered it; we hope they do. We've had very good press elsewhere in places like *The Guardian*, *Newsweek*, *The Daily Beast*, and others that have done extremely good coverage. Just this morning, *The Daily Beast* put out a story whose headline made my heart sing because it said, "Trump Death Clock in Times Square May be Coming to a City Near You," and that's exactly what we want to see. We want to see this symbol in the court of public opinion hanging all over this country during this very sensitive year. If that sounds like I'm

saying is to get rid of President Trump, what I'm [actually] saying is to demand responsible leadership.

Ralph Nader: No reaction yet from the White House?

Eugene Jarecki: No reaction yet, no. Surprisingly, usually he reacts to this kind of thing; maybe he will, maybe he won't. We've had some defenders of his say mean things about me, or about the clock, or how it's unfair, but that's to be expected, and everyone has the right to their view. The biggest criticisms we've had, Ralph, are from people who are critics of the president who wish we had put a bigger number up there. They wish we were charging him with some of those earlier decisions and actions that are deeply regrettable. And I have to explain to them we were conservative and careful, especially because we are not trying to divide people. We think every American has a stake in this number. This is not something that is with one president or one party at all. As we've seen very clearly, there have been errors up and down the pike and across the aisle. But this is the number, and there should be clocks for that; there should be a clock if there's a relevant clock for another institution, another individual, another country - no problem, do them. This is the Trump Death Clock. This is specific to the decisions and the course of action that he followed--in this case, a course of inaction at a time where every second counts and every life counts.

Ralph Nader: Let me quote from an article you wrote for *The Washington Post* on this. This is by Eugene Jarecki, May 6, 2020, "It's all in the branding, that stuff Trump himself does so well when he applies derisive nicknames to his rivals or attaches the name of a foreign power to a global pandemic. Accountability needs a brand, and the National Debt Clock, that's D-E-B-T, is a helpful precedent. It demonstrates how to plant a symbolic flag in the numbers, one that can't be knocked over by bluster or misleading campaign videos."

This is the first time I've seen anybody take Trump's brand. You know, the Trump Towers, the Trump Hotel, the Trump Casinos, and attach it to a reality that he would find considerably disagreeable. In that sense, since the nicknames have been hurled at leading Democrats: Crazy Nancy, and all the other things.

Eugene Jarecki: Lying Ted and Crooked Hillary.

Ralph Nader: Have there been any responses by Democrats: Senators, Representatives, governors, Governor Cuomo, anybody?

Eugene Jarecki: Not so far. I think, for sure, it's considered to be a very sensitive action. These numbers speak for themselves, and they charge mass reckless endangerment at a minimum. That is such a huge charge that I think politicians, who are in the middle of their election year, are fighting their issue about the stimulus bill or whatever else. We haven't yet seen them grab onto this and say, "This is an effective tool for me to remind about the gravity of this disregard." I think it'll come, and one of the ways we're helping that, Ralph, is we're now doing additional mathematical modeling to figure out, "Well, we all know the hardest-hit communities in America: African American communities, Latinx communities, the elderly, and others: nurses, cops, all the frontline workers," that each of those groups is disproportionately hit by this. They have been

disproportionately damaged by Trump and his team, and accordingly, we're making other clocks, other sort of widgets that people can use in their own pursuits and in their own consideration that say, "This is the number of African American lives that were cost by the Trump administration's reckless disregard. This is the number of elderly, this is the number of nursing home workers, this is the number of police, EMS." So, all of those numbers are going to start to help people in communities, whether they are just regular people, or activists, or even politicians, have numbers to show to their constituencies about how grave this was and about how necessary it is that an immediate course correction toward responsibility be undertaken.

Ralph Nader: Leading citizen groups haven't reacted, as far as I know.

Eugene Jarecki: Not yet.

Ralph Nader: Public Citizen, People For the American Way, Common Cause.

Eugene Jarecki: Not yet, but to be fair, this is three or four days old, Ralph, so we're hoping right now; we hope that they're listening to your program and they say, Oh my gosh, this is a very useful instrument, no different than the names on a Vietnam Memorial for warning us about the danger of reckless war. This is the danger of reckless pandemic leadership! And we all know this isn't going anywhere; we're going to be dealing with this kind of thing, going forward.

Ralph Nader: Let me try an explanation. I think the country, in all its variations, is deeply intimidated by Trump. Members of Congress are intimidated, people who dislike him in the military, people who dislike him in intelligence agencies, citizen groups; they don't like to hurl back what he hurls forward every day. This is like a one-off for a president who's been concerned about health and safety, and this is his bad period in the COVID virus. He is destroying health and safety protections in the environmental, the food and drug, the auto safety, nursing home deregulation, opening up more reckless oil spills in the Gulf. You name it, he's turning around the life-saving protections and destroying these health and safety regulations with his cronies at the head of the EPA, the Auto Safety Agencies [Department of Transportation and its National Highway Traffic Safety Administration], and OSHA, etcetera. I think there's more than just it's only a few days. This is a spectacular physical demonstration of his recklessness in one of the most well-known places in America. I understand it's 54-feet high, and something is going on here, and I think Mike Schmidt, a leading reporter for the *New York Times* once put it, "You know, the Democrats have never been able to get their arms around Trump. It's like he's too outrageous, too illegal, too impeachable, too much of a lout, too much of a bigot, too much of a savage sexual predator to develop the vernacular, to develop the response." I'm pretty shocked that the *New York Times*, who has done a spectacular job taking Trump apart every day, reporter after reporter has, in effect, not reported your Trump Death Clock.

Eugene Jarecki: I'm surprised too, and I also understand this fear factor that Trump generates. He is a specific kind of bully in society, and he has been rich his whole life, so he's always bullied and thrown money at the bullying, and everyday people are frightened of being frivolously adjudicated against, of being bothered, and barraged with lawsuits and things. When I was writing my editorial for what ended up being *The Washington Post*, we showed it to the *New York Times*, which didn't want to publish it. *The Washington Post* courageously did, but when we were writing it, I remember

people looking at me when I was talking about designing a Trump Death Clock, and they looked at me with a combination of great admiration and pity, as if they saw; they looked at me like the cartoon character who is about to have a piano dropped on his head and he doesn't know it. They were thinking, "Great, Eugene, you go mount this courageous symbolic act against the president, but you know, he comes after everybody; you should be so scared of that." It is the culture we live in that he is like a mob boss. He has you with an offer you can't refuse, which is, do it the way I want you to do it, or you'll end up in the East River. And it's not that different from that, and I just think I can't be bothered with that. Fifty thousand lives have been lost, at this point to reckless leadership; as a citizen, those are me, and I have to stand up for better leadership.

Ralph Nader: You know, Eugene, when a bully knows he's met his match, he doesn't respond; he runs away. So, in a way, you're getting a response, because there's no way the White House antenna and all its media sensitivities doesn't know about the Trump Death Clock in Times Square.

Eugene Jarecki: Yeah, he doesn't want to have Trump Death Clock coming out of his mouth 30 seconds after he's talking about Trump Steaks or Trump Casino. That's not a good brand; I agree with that. Recently, he made some leering remarks about Bernie Sanders and Biden, how Bernie had actually not stopped campaigning, and wasn't that interesting. He really didn't end his campaign. What he meant was, this is a little more tricky than you know, and Bernie and Biden are not on the same page, and I know better than everybody, and here's my wink wink.

Two days later, Bernie and Biden go on TV, as if they're chums, completely talking the same language about joining their efforts together, and as you say, what did we notice from Trump? Suddenly, no tweeting. Two days later, Obama endorses Biden, something that Trump had also been leering wasn't happening and, what does Obama know that we don't know? And he was again winking at the public like in that leering way he does. As soon as Obama vocally endorsed Biden, once again, no tweet from the Donald. There's something interesting in what you're saying. He doesn't tend to grab onto things that he can't be the stronger party in, so maybe it's flattering.

Ralph Nader: There's another example. Last year, at the Nationals baseball game that Trump attended, some people started clamoring, "Lock him up, lock him up," and he didn't exhort his rallies to say, "Lock him up, lock him up." That's another example. When bullying meets its match, it tends to recede. That's the nature of a bully.

Eugene Jarecki: You saw, just this week, the amazing news conference outside in the Garden when the female journalists questioned him with beautiful precision and measuredness, and he got so upset, he walked out of a press conference. That didn't look good, but he can't do it the other way. He only, as a bully and as a person who's been a coward bully, an enabled bully his whole life, when he gets put on a real playing field, he folds, and collapses, and sort of turns tail.

Ralph Nader: Any quick question, Steve, David?

David Feldman: How much does a billboard in Times Square run for right now?

Eugene Jarecki: It goes for a song, and across the country because no one's looking at these things, you could actually get your billboard up, but we did have obstacles.

David Feldman: How much?

Eugene Jarecki: I'm not going to disclose that, because it's a few people who helped us do it, and it's in the small thousands of dollars, thank God. It's less than \$10,000 to do it, so it's a very achievable thing in a big town like New York. Imagine how cheap it is in a smaller town across the country or in a big city. This can be done for hundreds of dollars, if people want to do it, and even slightly bigger places, a thousand or two. It can be done very, very cheaply, and we were amazed to discover that we could even do it in Times Square, the advertising capital of the planet.

Steve Skrovan: Eugene, by the math, by my math, there's over 80,000 deaths, nationally, now. The clock accounts for 50,000 during that week of inaction. If he had acted a week earlier, we're saying that those deaths that we're seeing listed on the cable news networks would be more around 30,000?

Eugene Jarecki: Yeah, exactly. We'd be living in a country right now still with about 30,000 death toll, but not a country with an 80,000 death toll. He'd be presiding over another reality, and I think he would be, perhaps, even lauded for it instead of receiving the kind of disapproval and drop in his ratings, and general condemnation by the world, and by so many American voters that he's receiving now.

Ralph Nader: Other countries like South Korea and Taiwan who acted earlier prove your point.

Eugene Jarecki: Yeah, South Korea is up at 300 deaths, and we have 80,000 deaths, and we are six times larger. If we had done what South Korea did, in theory, we'd be at 1,800 dead instead of 80,000, so it's a surreal set of mistakes. And it was decisions that the president made that he felt were politically in his interest, and whatever inside him guided him to do it this way, and it has had grave consequences, and that's what the Trump Death Clock symbolizes. And at trumpdeathclock.com, people can see the numbers advance moment by moment.

Ralph Nader: Indeed, he's indicted by his own words in January, and February, dismissing everything, "We have it under total control, it's not much different than the flu, only a few people," on and on. This isn't supposition. You have it very well-grounded in terms of his own indifferent positions, day by day, week by week. We've been talking with Eugene Jarecki, the famed documentary filmmaker, the author of a book, *The American Way of War*, and the creator with his team of this 54-foot billboard in Times Square that tells you, minute by minute, the deadly consequences of the mismanagement and the delay to deal with the coronavirus epidemic. Thank you very much, Eugene.

Eugene Jarecki: Great talking to you, guys. Thank you so much. Ralph, you're a national treasure, an international treasure. Thanks for having me.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Eugene Jarecki. The Trump Death Clock is located in Times Square, but you can check it from the safety of your home via the link at RalphNaderRadioHour.com. We're going to take a short break. When we return, let's talk about

what's important about having a public postal service. First, let's check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

Russell Mokhiber: From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your Corporate Crime Reporter Morning Minute for Friday, May 15, 2020. I'm Russell Mokhiber. Journalist, Sarah Chayes has a new book coming out. It's called *On Corruption in America* [AND WHAT IS AT STAKE]. Chayes says that the United States is showing signs similar to some of the most corrupt countries in the world. Corruption, as she sees it, is an operating system of sophisticated networks in which government officials keep private sector interests and out-and-out criminals interweave. Their main objective [is] not to serve the public, but to maximize returns for network members. Chayes shows how corrupt systems are organized, how they enforce the rules so their crimes are covered legally, how they are overlooked and downplayed, shrugged off with a roll of the eyes, [and] how they've become an overt principle undermining the shape of our government, affecting all levels of society. For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. I'm Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman and Ralph. Although we are able to produce this show completely digitally, there are many things that cannot be done online. One of these things is delivering medications; they can be ordered online, but they require the Postal Service to deliver them. Last year, the Postal Service delivered over a billion medications, and the Postal Service will be critical in our November election so we can vote by mail. David?

David Feldman: Mark Dimondstein is the President of the American Postal Workers Union. Since 2013 when Dimondstein was elected, he has turned the APWU into a fighting activist organization. Mr. Dimondstein advocates for the rights of postal workers as well as the right of the American people to a vibrant public postal service. The American Postal Workers Union supports Medicare-for-All and belongs to the Labor Campaign for Single Payer. The APWU believes in paying a living wage and providing benefits to all workers. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Mark Dimondstein.

Mark Dimondstein: Thank you so much, and it's always good to be here.

Ralph Nader: Thank you, Mark. Let's frame the discussion by quoting from a recent article by historian Christopher Shaw, who you know, and has written a book on the Postal Service. This appeared in *The Hill* newspaper, and I'm quoting him, "The Postal Service plays a vital role with more than 30,000 post offices, hundreds of sorting facilities. The postal system is also an essential infrastructure possessing the unique ability to make contact with every household and business in the nation daily. The indispensable physical connection the Postal Service maintains between the American people and the federal government means the institution's future is a matter of national security. COVID-19 also makes clear that the Postal Service has a necessary role to play in health security as a mechanism for delivering health-related materials and communications." 500,000 people work in the U.S. Postal Service, and now we have Donald Trump calling it a joke. What is the plight of the Postal Service, what caused it, and what does Trump intend to do about it?

Mark Dimondstein: You've asked a number of critical questions, Ralph, and let me first say we greatly appreciate your decades-long support for the common good, the public good, the public

commons, and the public Postal Service, which is such a key part of that. I think that the plight of the Postal Service, first off, I always like to remind all of the listeners that postal workers are out here in very difficult and challenging times on the frontlines, worried about their health rightfully so, but still carrying out the mission of binding the country together, which is the fundamental mission of the public Postal Service founded a year before the country was, and what we all consider a national treasure. A big salute to all the frontline workers, not just us, but all the truck drivers, all the transit workers, all the wonderful healthcare personnel, the meat packers, the grocery store workers, and so on. But, we're on the frontline and proudly carrying out the mission. This pandemic, which has caused such economic devastation [to] the people around the world and this entire country, unless maybe you're in the 1%, is having a devastating and dire impact on the Postal Service itself just dealing with COVID. There are other challenges. There's pre-funding mandates on retiree healthcare that was manufactured 12, 13 years ago that's drained the Post Office of funds. There's a challenge there, other challenges. Leaving those aside for the moment, Ralph, just looking at COVID, the Post Office is a non-taxpayer-funded entity. It runs off the revenue of postage and postal products and services. That revenue has to be enough, and for decades, it has been, even with the challenges, to then carry out the wonderful mission: 160 million addresses, six days, sometimes now seven days a week. The universal service obligation, that small D democratic right to get this service on an equal basis, uniform, at reasonable rates to all of us, no matter who we are and where we live. Not a question on how to make a profit. It's a question how to serve the people. We can put a letter in the mail from one side of the country and seemingly, magically, it appears in another side of the country because of the 500,000 postal workers out there doing their job, and it's all reasonable, and it's all fair, and it is a real equalizer and a wonderful and vital service.

Here's what's happened. The revenue is precipitously falling because mail buying is precipitously falling based on the economic impact of the pandemic. What's happening is the Post Office is literally without financial assistance from Congress. It will literally--sometime this year, depends on the modeling, it could be late summer, it could be early fall, it could be later fall--run out of money. Here, we have a situation, and now we get back to the Trump forces and what's going on there in the question you asked there. We have a lot of bipartisan support for the Postal Service starting amongst the people. Ninety-one percent the last Pew Research poll, highest than ever, equally, interestingly, and significantly--equally amongst those who identify as Republicans and those who identify as Democrats. For the people of this country, this is not a partisan issue.

Ralph Nader: How does Trump, who's got political antenna, dare to basically say he's not going to sign a bill that Congress is going to pass that helps the Post Office survive, given how many Republicans in the Congress have rural areas, and the last thing they want to be accused of is colluding with Trump to close these offices down?

Mark Dimondstein: If they do indeed collude and continue to collude, then they're going to have to answer to their constituents back home, because the people are very united on this issue. Ralph, it's interesting. In the \$2.2 trillion stimulus package, 500 billion, at least, went to private corporations. The House side of it, the House of Representatives had 25 billion in that proposal to make up for the lost revenue of COVID, not other issues, just the lost postal revenue of COVID.

Yet the Postal Service, through this crisis, they continue to serve the people of the country. As you said, the medicines, the voting information, the medical information, the checks, all sorts of important things. The Senate, the Republican-controlled Senate even had some serious money there, somewhere around 13 to 14 billion, all would have been a help. The normal times, you would say, logically, "Well, if the House wants 25 billion, the Senate wants 13, 14, 15, then it's going to come out somewhere in between." The secretary, treasurer, Goldman Sachs, Mnuchin told Congress that there would be no incentive package, no stimulus package if the Postal Service is included, and unfortunately, our "friends in Congress" who were, on a bipartisan basis, trying to get some help didn't have it high enough on their agenda, so what we say flipped the script on this administration and said, "Guess what? You won't have an incentive package unless the people of this country are taken care of with their postal services." So, we really need for the people of the country, for the listeners to call their Congress people. The House just put forth a new stimulus package. It has 25 billion again to make up for lost revenue from the COVID pandemic on the Postal Service, but people need to hear, and you're right. Rural America and the Post Office is important for everybody. It has a special place in rural America, and many of the Republican senators are from rural America, and in our experience, many of them support the Postal Services. We need for them to stand up, we need for the whole Congress to stand up, but we know that they're not necessarily going to do that unless the people of the country ensure that this national treasure remains in our hands.

Ralph Nader: We're talking with Mark Dimondstein, the head of the American Postal Workers Union. Mark, what's amazing here is that the business community wants the Post Office to be secure and to be able to perform the service. The military calls it a national security necessity, the military, and of course you come in with the poll you just mentioned, overwhelming number of people: Republican, Democrat, doesn't matter, Red State, Blue State, they want that Post Office to be maintained in their community, and they want it to be sustained with this Congressional relief legislation. How does Trump, politically, never mind his mad dog propensity, dare take on Benjamin Franklin's Post Office? And I daresay if Benjamin Franklin was here today, he would say, "Getting rid of the Post Office; impeach him immediately!" How does Trump dare to do it, politically? He's looking for votes.

Mark Dimondstein: You know what Ben Franklin may tell the president, if he was here, is to go fly a kite, but that's another debate. I don't know how he dares to. He's obviously taken care of his benefactors; he's taken care of private companies that would profit from the demise of the public Postal Service. They are on record. They, meaning this administration, is on record from June 2018 in an Office of Management and Budget report, that's the White House OMB openly advocating and saying they planned to privatize the public Postal Service, i.e., sell it off to private corporations. A few corporations would benefit, and the rest of the people would suffer, because whether we get mail at all, how often we get it, under what cost and what price would then depend on whether somebody can make a quick buck. He's doing their bidding. For instance, when he called the Post Office "a joke", which is a huge insult for every postal worker, no matter our political stripes, and we represent people through the entire spectrum, an insult to every postal worker, particularly in this moment of challenge and danger. We've had 61 postal workers die from COVID. We've had thousands tested positive and sick, and we've had over 10,000 quarantined, and the president of

the United States has the nerve to call it a joke. But, it's not a joke beyond that there's no customer that thinks it's a joke as they get their medicine, as they get their mail, and people like it for different reasons. Some people like to get the catalogs; some people like to get the coupons; some people love to get -- we all love to get our birthday cards, and our Father's Day card, or Mother's Day cards if we have families, and so on. We use it in different ways, and you pointed up something too in industry. In a moment of the e-commerce revolution, if we don't have a public postal service with an infrastructure that goes to every address, then it doesn't work for everybody. It doesn't work for a lot of small businesses that rely on the Post Office to get started and to carry forward.

Ralph Nader: People tell me, around the country, that the postal workers don't have enough protective equipment. Are the letter carriers wearing masks and gloves? Are the people in the post offices wearing protective equipment?

Mark Dimondstein: Generally, for the most part, yes. When this thing first hit, to an extent, the Post Office was scrambling in terms of enough personal protective equipment, the PPE. That was addressed pretty quickly; the unions collaborated very strongly with each other. There are four postal unions, and we did cooperate in an aggressive way, but a cooperative way with postal management. In an organization that, throughout the whole country in every town and city, and so on, there were certainly gaps, but the PPEs are readily available now, and all the employees who want it have it, and if they can't get it, we can get that fixed quickly. So, I think that's been a positive story, but it started off somewhat rocky because they think the Postal Service itself, like many organizations, were not prepared enough by the Federal Government as to what was coming down the pike, but we've also put a lot of health and safety issues in place in the workplaces. The window clerks now, when you go to buy your stamps, there's plastic curtains between the customer and the window clerk; there's a lot of plexiglass that is in place now; there was extra wash-up, extra cleanings, all those things to try to get the maximum protection for the workers, first and foremost, and of course, their families when they go home, and it protects the postal customers when the workers are better protected as well. It's the only way we can carry out the mission. We have to be able to do it safely as possible.

Ralph Nader: Trump is acting like a bull in a china shop. He's appointed one of his crony donors to be the next Postmaster General. Is he going to get confirmed?

Mark Dimondstein: He doesn't have to be confirmed, Ralph. It's kind of a unique thing. The Post Office Department, pre-1970 and the Great Postal Strike that took place at that time, it was the Post Office Department. It was a cabinet-level position, so the head of the Post Office was appointed by the president. Post-1970, as part of the way to take patronage and cronyism out of the system, the Post Office was spun off as a quasi-independent agency of the government. The Postal Board of Governors who is appointed by the President confirmed by the Senate then chooses the Postmaster General. The Postal Board of Governors, who are all now have been appointed by President Trump and confirmed from the Senate, they have now hired the PMG, Louis DeJoy, who's a big donor. One of the concerning things for us is that it put the patronage and cronyism, apparently, right back into front and center, and we do have a concern, a deep concern that this particular President, and you notice I'm talking about him and his administration, not all Republicans, as we do have a lot of support amongst both sides of the aisle, and more importantly,

amongst the people of the country. Interestingly, as an aside, this Postal Board of Governors on a bipartisan basis, unanimously, has asked Congress for strong COVID financial relief. So, they're on the right side of that, but they chose this Postmaster General. He's in, and of course, our concern I was getting at, I'm sorry I diverted for a moment, this administration has a habit, this president has a modus operandi, so to speak, of appointing heads to agencies that are hostile to its very mission, whether it's education, whether it's interior, whether it's EPA, and while the president and the [US] Treasury Department did not directly appoint the new PMG, we know that they had a hand in helping to pick who the next PMG was going to be. So, this new PMG has a choice. Because of the way it's happened, we're not going to give him the benefit of the doubt, but we are going to welcome him proving that he really believes in the public mission, and if he's willing to do that, great. What we're concerned about is he's there to carry out an agenda of this administration, which is to raise prices, reduce service, cut workers' benefits as a path and as a first step to setting up the Post Office for total privatization. Those things are all in the postal -- there was a postal presidential task force that reported out in December 2018 [*United States Postal Service: A sustainable Path Forward*] and called for all of those things, and if any of those things are to happen, people of this country will pay a price.

Ralph Nader: You've been a big champion of restoring postal savings bank facilities in the Post Office. Until 1968, people could go and put their savings there if they couldn't get access to the banks, and there are now unbanked people in this country. The banks don't want them. They don't want them because they can't make a profit off of them, so they have to go to payday lenders, and check cashing stores, and get ripped off, and if the Post Office reopens under congressional authorization, these postal savings facilities who would expand the services, help the Post Office, but more important, it would help tens of millions of people who are now unbanked, are being ripped off mercilessly. Can you just briefly describe what you're doing on this?

Mark Dimondstein: Sure, 30 million, at least, unbanked, and it could be up to 80 million who are unbanked, and what's considered underbanked, which means they're in this predatory payday lending check cashing industry. We would love to get back to a public banking system, but short of that, we would love to see the Post Office, and this is where our emphasis has been, just provide some expanded financial service, [like] paycheck cashing and put it on a no-fee postal debit card so you're not getting ripped off cashing the check, and you're not getting ripped off using a debit card every time you use it. Money transfers, electronic bill paying, all of those things, the Post Office can easily do; the systems are in place. We're trusted, the postal workers are trusted, the agency is trusted, and we're in every community from the most populated urban center to the most remote rural outpost. And how great would it be to be able to take care of basic financial services outside of this rip-off system for a fair low fee, take care of your issues; and then again, the civic life of the Post Office, of the public commons, of binding the people together is that much more strengthened. Same with vote by mail. It's a civic role that the Post Office has been playing for generations, actually. Military folks overseas have been voting by mail for generations. It's expanded to five states where it's by law. Many states, it's no fault. California, bigger than most countries on Earth, half the people vote by mail. That's part of the civic role. It's not how people vote, it's giving people that access to be able to exercise that democratic right to vote, and that's becoming a huge question with this pandemic and whether people can even physically get to a

poll. And here's this wonderful agency that can easily perform that and has been doing it with great success over many, many decades. That civic role of financial services, of democratic rights, and of course, all of the day-to-day things, are something that we're going to keep alive. We need everybody's help. We need them to call all of their Congress people, and Senators, in particular, and make sure that what belongs to us is not stolen, and I don't think we're going to allow it to happen.

Ralph Nader: I was just going to say that. We've been talking to Mark Dimondstein, the head of the American Postal Workers Union. Our listeners are probably asking now how do we get more information? Do you have a website you want to give them?

Mark Dimondstein: We do, we do. It's APWU, that's four letters, so the WU sometimes sounds like one. APWU.org, a lot of information, there's a good petition on there; would love people to sign and share. There's an easy way to contact the folks in Congress. There's also another very good one, a website that's very informative: U.S. Mail Not For Sale, S-A-L-E. We know that the powers that be in many quarters do want to sell it and break it up and sell it, and we want to make sure it stays in the hands of the people. There's a lot of good information there as well.

Ralph Nader: Before we conclude, Mark, any comments from Dave and Steve?

Steve Skrovan: Yeah, Mark, a lot of problems with the Post Office seem to go back to this 2006 law that was passed, I believe, in a bipartisan way called the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act. And it required the Post Office to prepay healthcare benefits for retirees in a 50-year schedule, which meant you had to set aside \$5 billion a year for 10 years and put caps on products and services. It passed in a bipartisan way. Was this some sort of well-intentioned bill that went wrong, or was this an attempt to strangle the Post Office to set it up for privatization?

Mark Dimondstein: I think that it was probably both, depending on how and where people stood. There was definitely an effort to undermine the Postal Service. If you want to get at the public good, whether it's public education, public transit, public hospitals, or public postal service, you have to defund it first, and then say, "Oh it's a failure," and say "Let's do something else." And that was a defunding effort, a manufactured defunding effort. The Postal Service, like every other company and agency, were simply paying those costs as they come up on just an ongoing basis. That's the way it should have been. It was 5.5 billion a year for 10 years. The Post Office couldn't do it, no other company could have done it, but it did drain billions out. They weren't able to do the full 10 years, and it gives the Treasury Department that much more of a thumb on the Post Office as in how come you haven't paid us? You owe us more money and so on. And all that money just went into the trenches. It could have stayed in buying new fuel-efficient vehicles, upgrading buildings, expanding services like Ralph was talking about on financial services, keeping post offices open later so that working people can get to that service easier and so on. It all got drained out. There were probably some people that voted with it because they thought it was just the right thing to do at the time, we would get through it, and then right after that happened, there was the Great Recession, and that took away a lot of mail at that time. The combination has certainly caused a problem, but even with that problem, and by the way, Congress had just passed in the House, I think, at the end of last year, early this year, to do away with that prefunding mandate,

and it passed with overwhelming bipartisan support. Half of the Republican Caucus in the House voted in favor of doing away with that onerous, Draconian, unfair policy. It was just starting to move through the Senate on a bipartisan basis when the pandemic hit. Now, what we're focused on, because we have to get through this to be able to get beyond to deal with the other fixits, right now we're really dealing with financial relief, not more loans. The Senate did another \$10 billion, said the Post Office could borrow another 10 billion on their borrowing authority. That just makes matters worse, and now the Treasury is saying even to get it, you have to do A, B, and C, and all that's negative for the service to the people. We have to get the COVID relief, real relief, and darn it, if they can be bailing out, and loaning, and granting to all these private corporations, let's make sure that we can debate whether that's right or wrong at another time. We just find out the other day that in the CARES \$2.2 trillion package that there was hidden in there an \$80 billion tax break for the super-wealthy a year, and the Post Office couldn't get - meaning the people of this country - 25 billion one time.

Ralph Nader: The *New York Times* reported that. Well, we're out of time. We've been talking with Mark Dimondstein, the head of the American Postal Workers Union. And I just want to say that our group has put out two reports over the years, two major reports on the Postal Service, and every time I pass a postal worker delivering the mail, I say to her or him, "Viva the Post Office." Thank you very much, Mark.

Mark Dimondstein: Ralph, thanks so much for your great support over the years. Your organizations are part of a grand alliance to save our public Post Office, and that's never been more urgent than now. Let's go out and win this fight. Thanks, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: We will win it. Thank you, Mark.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Mark Dimondstein, the President of the American Postal Workers Union. We will link to their website at RalphNaderRadioHour.com. Hey, let's do some listener questions. David, why don't you do the honors?

David Feldman: This first one comes from Cheriesa Selman. She says, "My question is what might be the best way to hold my Congressional Representative, Ted Cruz, and John Cornyn in the Senate, and Roger Williams in the House, liable for quasi-judicial competence? Basically, I want to file a human rights violation with the UN against them for their loyalty to special interests, and failure to propose any preventative solutions, repeatedly voting against Medicare-for-All, which is the only solution, moving forward, for the COVID-19 crisis, which has been released in a statement by Margaret Harris of the WHO. I've read *How the Rats Re-formed the Congress* and starting building a website last night. I'm trying my best to not overwhelm myself and accomplish one task at a time. Thank you for being the solution, Mr. Nader."

Ralph Nader: I think you're trying to be a solution. The important thing is to develop that letterhead, Congress Watchdog Group, focusing on the two senators, start getting more and more names, and put it on the internet, and talk about it. You'll get their attention. As far as appealing to the UN, you know the UN is likely to say that they don't have jurisdiction over this. There are some people from Puerto Rico complaining about their colonial status, which they thought was

not the Commonwealth status, the colonial status, to the UN, and they didn't get much of a hearing. But, focus directly on what you think these two senators should be doing in Texas.

David Feldman: This next one comes to us from Liv Tsitrin. "Dear, Mr. Nader, I'm surprised by adamant refusal of journalists to cover fraud routinely perpetrated by federal judges when they replace, in their decisions, party's argument with judge's own so as to decide cases the way they want to, not the way they have to."

Ralph Nader: There is a problem. We don't have much judicial watchdog efforts in this country. There are some really bad judges, a few of them are outright corrupt, others are extremely biased toward a certain point of view in the case, and they will make rules on inadmissible evidence and they will basically be extremely tyrannical, and it's very hard to stand up to a judge in the courtroom. You can always appeal, but the immediate case, that judge is in charge, just like captain of a ship. And so I think we ought to talk more about this. These judges are increasingly appointed for their willingness to expand presidential powers way beyond the Constitution, their willingness to place people subordinate to corporate power. We see that in 5-4 decisions on the Supreme Court, and it's important to open up that discussion. There's not a halo around these judges; they're human beings with all the virtues and frailties, plus a lifetime appointment for Federal judges, of course, and that doesn't generate much deterrence against bad behavior.

David Feldman: Next question comes from Jeffrey Haasch, and he wants to talk about online contracts. He says, "These online contracts, where one is expected to click 'Agree to the terms' are a standing joke. It is commonly accepted knowledge that nobody reads them, and thus nobody actually agrees with them. Isn't one of the most basic tenets in contract law the meeting of the minds? With them being a standing joke, how do these pass muster?"

Ralph Nader: It's more than a standing joke. It's destroying our freedom of contract, one of the two great pillars of private law in the United States, the other one being the freedom to sue a wrongdoer, have a trial by jury under tort law. Contract law is being destroyed, and this fine print takes away any sense of consent. You end up finding out, when there's a conflict between you and the seller, all kinds of things that you are not able to advance in order to achieve justice for your purchase. And we see that: compulsory arbitration, waiver of liability, all kinds of penalties that they put on you as they strip you of your defenses. If anybody is interested in knowing more about it, go to FairContracts.org, that's FairContracts.org. You'll get more context and you'll get some ideas on how to defend yourself by avoiding some of these contracts, and if you can't, what rights you have that are left for you. FairContracts.org.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you for your questions. Keep them coming on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* website. I want to thank our guests again, Eugene Jarecki and Mark Dimondstein. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call "The Wrap Up".

David Feldman: Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* when we welcome back Greg LeRoy from Good Jobs First about ending corporate giveaways. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you, everybody, and let's save the Post Office and restore its prominence in American society.