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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON CNN'S THE SITUATION ROOM WITH WOLF BLITZER

Wolf Blitzer: Joining us now, the Mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio. Mayor de Blasio, thank you so much for joining us. What's your reaction to hearing, first of all, the White House chief of staff, Mark Meadows, say “we are not going to control the pandemic.”

Mayor Bill de Blasio: You know, Wolf, you talk about a tale of two cities. You've got Mark Meadows on the one hand raising the flag of surrender and you've got to Anthony Fauci saying we should have a national mask mandate. Dr. Fauci is right. Dr. Fauci is trying to lead us in the right direction and say, let's get serious and stop this crisis before it gets worse. And a national mandate, something that could actually bring us all together in common cause is what we need in this country. But Mark Meadows – I didn't think I could be shocked, Wolf, but how on earth does the White House chief of staff, saying they can't control the problem when, in fact, the federal government has a host of tools it's never even used to address this problem. From day-one, missing in action when you're talking about an absence of testing, absence of a stimulus program to help us back on our feet and help our health care sector. I mean, how on earth are they giving up when, in fact, things like a mask mandate – there's so many things that we could do right now to save American lives.

Blitzer: Yeah. Just take a look at some other countries like South Korea, they've succeeded in controlling this pandemic. Unfortunately, sadly, tragically, we here in the United States have failed in controlling this pandemic. More than half of all states right now, Mayor, had their highest single day of new COVID cases this month. Some hospitals are about to be overrun. Are there lessons they can take from New York City's recovery from the height of this crisis? We all remember what was going on in April.

Mayor: Absolutely, Wolf. We were the epicenter. We went through hell. Our hospitals were being overrun, so we've been there. Let me tell you what worked – mask usage works. It should be a mandate everywhere. Social distancing works. Testing constantly works. These are things we know how to do. And those countries around the world that has succeeded, that's exactly what they did – that kind of combination. They put a lot of muscle behind it. They stuck with it. In this country, too many places started with some restrictions, gave up when they shouldn't have, and now they're paying a horrible, painful price. So, let's get it right. There's still time to get it right. You have a mask mandate. You have testing as a focus for the whole country. I said a long time ago, we're going to need the military to be involved if we're really going to distribute testing the way it should be, and, of course, the vaccine later on. But let's make this a national patriotic moment. I think Dr. Fauci was on the right track there to say, instead of fighting with

each other, why don't we declare this a national mission to stop this disease everywhere, because it's affecting all of us, and there are some things we could do in common that would make a huge difference. And New Yorkers proved it, it starts with just putting on that mask. It's not a political statement, it's simply helping to stop the spread of the disease.

Blitzer: It's so, so critically important. It will save thousands and thousands of lives if people simply did something simple and wore a mask. On a separate, somewhat related issue, there are these long lines for early voting in New York City. In the last hour, I spoke with the New York Governor Cuomo, he told me that the New York City Board of Elections should have been better prepared. Some people have been waiting three, four hours simply to vote. Do you agree with the Governor?

Mayor: Yeah. I'll tell you – I'm not happy with the Board of Elections. So, the Board of Elections in New York City is still a partisan entity. It's not run by the City of New York. It's run by a party bosses and it shouldn't be. It should be a modern, official organization that works with accountability. It doesn't have accountability right now. What we've seen is, Wolf – is it a news flash there was going to be heavy turnout in this election? Of course not. We've seen it coming for years. The good news, almost 200,000 people in New York City voted this week in early voting, and there's big lines today, which shows the enthusiasm. But I don't like big lines when they don't have to exist. Our Board of Elections, they need to get in gear, get more machines out there, more personnel, longer hours, make it easier for people to vote. And I'm worried when you see long lines, there's also the possibility of intimidation. There's the possibility of voter suppression. There's a possibility of folks emboldened by the President to not believe in the legitimacy of our elections, to come in and try and stop people from voting, especially in immigrant communities and communities of color. We've started an Election Observer Corps, City officials, lawyers who are going to be out there on Election Day to prevent any effort to intimidate voters or suppress the voting process.

Blitzer: So, the goal would be with this volunteer group of election observers – what would be the goal?

Mayor: To make sure that if there's any hint of organized suppression that it's immediately stopped with legal action, police action, whatever it takes. But what I fear, not just in New York City, but around the whole country is you have gotten folks who for months and months now have been told by their president that the election might not be legitimate. And, obviously, all the negativity this president has directed towards immigrants in particular. And I think you're going to see some people, his followers in particular, try and take matters into their own hand, try to suppress votes, try to intimidate people from voting, try to disrupt the election process. We cannot let that happen. So, what I'm doing in this city is I'm putting a force out there to stop any effort of voter intimidation. And I think leaders around the country should do the same thing. We've been given enough warning signs that some people might want to disrupt this election. We can't let it happen.

Blitzer: All right, Mayor. Thank you so much for joining us. The Mayor of New York City Bill de Blasio, always appreciate your being here in the Situation Room. Thanks very much.

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