

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 18, 2020, 7:45 PM

CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO APPEARS LIVE ON MSNBC WITH ALI VELSHI

***Mayor Bill de Blasio:** Let's be clear, if President Trump raises his voice, the Republican Senate will follow period. Haven't heard his voice yet, I want to give him an opportunity to do the right thing. So, President Trump, here's my appeal to you, help us back on our feet. Tell Mitch McConnell that we need stimulus 3.5 and we need aid directly to New York City directly to New York State so we can keep providing the help that people need, keep them healthy, keep them safe. If you lead, the Senate will follow, if you are silent, they will not. It's on you, Mr. President.*

Ali Velshi: New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio pleading for help from the federal government and as the death toll in New York continues to rise, the city's Independent Budget Office estimates that 475,000 jobs could be lost over the next year as a result of the pandemic. Joining me now, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. Mayor de Blasio, good to see you. Thank you for joining us. You're talking about funding 3.5 in - in 3.0, phase three. The big bill that passed a couple of weeks ago, New York City got \$1.4 billion. You are looking for, am I right? A total of \$7 billion or \$7 additional billion dollars?

Mayor: No additional. I'll tell you why, Ali, I just announced my budget. We guarantee, unfortunately, we're going to lose over \$7 billion in revenue that had been something we were banking on to pay for all the services the city provides and obviously to help us restart our economy, that's gone now. It is absolutely gone and it could get even worse. So I'm simply asking the federal government to replace the revenue we lost in this pandemic and this economic crisis and to do the same for other cities or else we will have no choice but to cut back the most basic services, and that's going to stop us from ever seeing an economic recovery. We're the economic engines of the country, and we can't take care of our people if we have no place to turn for revenue.

But the federal government, Ali, they gave \$58 billion to the airline industry. I'm here in the nation's largest city, the epicenter of this epidemic, and I pleaded with the President directly. I've called him. I've spoken with him. I've said, Mr. President, I am losing revenue every day, I can't replace it. There's no way. Only you can do that. Speak up and the Senate will follow and he has been absolutely silent. So his first huge mistake was not acknowledging this crisis, not leading, not getting us testing for months and months, but this is his last chance, Ali. If he's going to have any chance of a recovery here, of getting a restart to this economy, any chance of being seen by history as someone who responded to this crisis, he has to act now and save the cities of America and save the American economy, and he's been absolutely silent. He has not said a word.

Velshi: Do you think his – Mayor, do you think his antipathy here has something to do with New York, or you, or is the same example across the country that he's using, because he's not really been a very forthcoming in terms of money. There's a certain amount of money that's going for go to to state governments, state governments, and your local revenues funds city governments. Is this a New York thing specifically or do you think it's a national issue?

Mayor: It's absolutely national. Just in the last couple of days, Ali, I spoke to the Mayor of Miami, Florida, who's a Republican. He has lost a huge amount of money in his budget. He doesn't have a way to replace it. I talked to the Mayor of Denver, Colorado, a Democrat. He has no way to provide those basic services. Mayors from Ohio put out a statement to the President. They said, we're going to have to lay off police and fire. They're already furloughing most of their public employees because they have no other option. This is absolutely happening all over the country and it's not red states, blue states, it's everyone. But what's going to go with it is if cities can't function, how on earth do you have a national recovery? The number of people in public service will be unemployed alone will be vast, let alone the fact that there's no basic services, how is it economy going to function?

So no Ali. I think it's something much bigger, but it may be a Republican philosophy standing in the way, but this President, you know how the Senate works, if he said jump, Mitch McConnell and the Republican Senate would jump. He could give them all the cover in the world to help make sure this country gets back on their feet - on our feet - and he is, I can't believe what I'm seeing. He literally is acting like nothing's going on and it's happening right now in Washington. The negotiations are going on. I appealed to him personally. I said, Mr. President, if just say the word, and Ali, I don't understand what I'm seeing before my eyes. He is acting like he has no responsibility and he can't move the Congress. When do you need to give away a billion and a – excuse me – a trillion and a half dollars, he wanted to give away a trillion and a half to the wealthy and corporations. He made the Senate do it. He could do that now for everyday people and for America's cities.

Velshi: Let me ask you this – paint a picture for me of New York City with \$1.4 billion at a shortfall of \$7 billion. What actually happens? Let's say we're three months down the road or four months down the road, we've lifted the work from home, in theory business is somewhat back to normal, obviously we will have lost a lot of small businesses and there will be a lot of people unemployed. What happens to a city that doesn't have enough money like New York City?

Mayor: So you can't provide basic services, what does that mean? It means all the things that people depend on in their lives, police, fire, sanitation, education, go down the list of all the things that makes any city, any town function. If you're missing \$7 billion, I assure you, you have to stop - you have to start to cut that stuff back in ways that can be very dangerous. But meanwhile, Ali, there are more and more people in the city who are hungry, literally have no money for food. There are more and more people who need more health care, we have to put a huge amount into our public health care system. We have the biggest hospital system of any city in the country. It's costing us a huge amount to deal with this pandemic.

If we don't have the money, what are we going to do? How are we going to save lives? So the notion of an economic recovery, a restart when in fact you're going to start to see cities fail. You're going to start to see cities on the road to bankruptcy. I mean, think about that reality, Ali, of a country that is literally starting to crumble because the federal government wouldn't act. You know, early in this crisis I compared Donald Trump to Herbert Hoover because he – it was like the Great Depression. He was ignoring it. He had no plan of action to address the coronavirus. He's reverting to that reality again. America's cities are hanging in the balance and he literally has nothing to say about it. It's unbelievable. So in a few months it just gets a lot worse.

Velshi: Let me ask you this – so the frustration on the part of regular people who are probably watching this is that they are craving leadership, right? Something's going on that is bigger than any of us can handle so we look to our leaders to deal with this. The President is developing acrimonious relationships with a number of governors across this country and including Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan and Andrew Cuomo of New York. You've had a famously acrimonious relationship with Governor Cuomo in New York. Are you able to get beyond that so that you and Governor Cuomo are on the same side of this thing as it relates to what you need from the federal government?

Mayor: Absolutely. You know what, in this kind of crisis, people put aside, they should put aside so many of those differences and Governor Cuomo and I have agreed that, you know, on almost everything in this crisis and we've been working together, our teams have been working together. But the fact that, you know, the President United States actually calls out Governors' names or mayors' names and attacks us and talks about, you know, whether he likes people or not. What leader in the middle of the worst health care crisis in a century wants to talk about who was nice to him or not? I mean this ridiculous Ali, and I think this is as simple as this. He's got one more chance, if he wants to have any reputation, any sense in the eyes of history that he did anything of this crisis, he's got to act right now before there's – we lose this chance to restart the economy. If he fails to protect Americans and American cities and American States and the economy, therefore can't restart, the final judgment of history, let alone the voters will be he blew it in the beginning and then he blew it when he had a chance to fix it, and all he cared about was who was nice to him and who wasn't. It's pitiful. So this is his one chance to get it right.

Velshi: Let me ask you about a tweet you sent out, because New York is one of those places where social distancing is more complicated than it is in let's say Dallas or a place like that because we're on the subway, we're on the streets all the time. The population of the city in normal times increases by 50 percent during the day versus the people who sleep in this city. You had tweeted out that if people aren't enforcing social distancing, they should snap a photo and text it to a 3-1-1. Is that actually happening? Are people doing that? And what happens as a result of that?

Mayor: Ali, they are doing it. I got to tell you, New Yorkers have been absolutely amazing, truly amazing at social distancing and shelter in place and this is maybe the hardest place in the country to achieve those things. But there's been a lot of discipline, except for a few people. And what I'm saying to my fellow New Yorkers is bluntly, to save lives, to protect people, you have to report any instance of crowding or people not observing social distancing. So folks are sending in those photos and we send out the NYPD immediately. NYPD is monitoring that feed

of photos. They can get officers out to the site. All people have to do is send in a photo and a location and we can get officers out there in 20 or 30 minutes in most cases to break up whatever's going on. And if people are not willing to follow the instructions by our police officers, they will be fined, and those fines go up to a \$1,000 now, because this is about saving lives. So we mean business.

Velshi: Mayor, I've got under a minute left, but I want to ask you, I've been talking to some EMTs who have said that they've been critical of your ability to get them the things that they need in order to operate safely. We've seen record numbers of 9-1-1 calls that we haven't seen actually since 9/11. Are the EMT and the FDNY and the police getting the protective gear that they need?

Mayor: Yes, absolutely, Ali, they are the priority along with our healthcare workers. Wherever we can get it around the world, we get it – in fact, we're making a lot of PPEs now in the city because we had no other choice. Of course, they're the priority. And in fact, we've gotten hundreds of ambulances, ambulance crews to come in from around the country to give them some relief. We have to protect them. We are protecting that. There's no question, but the federal government is failing to help cities like New York get those PPEs we need. We have to go try and find them ourselves. That's the reality.

Velshi: Mayor Bill de Blasio, thank you for joining me, sir. Mayor Bill de Blasio is of course, the Mayor of New York City, continued good luck in your efforts for this great city that we are in. And that does it for me tonight.

###