

Paul Weiss' Brad Karp: We Need Obama, Bush and Clinton to Beat the Coronavirus

Paul Weiss chair Brad Karp says "The health, safety and welfare of America's citizens would benefit from the wisdom, courage and experience" of the past presidents.

By Brad S. Karp
March 15, 2020

Americans no longer feel safe. Our citizens are traumatized. Our economy is paralyzed, our markets in free fall. Our educational system has been destabilized. Our cultural institutions have shuttered. Our professional and collegiate sports organizations have suspended play. And our health care system is on the verge of buckling under the avalanche of patients who will soon need emergency medical care and resources that do not exist. Hope and optimism, hallmarks of our nation throughout its history, are now in scarce supply. "The Great Coronavirus Pandemic" has managed to do what no foe has ever accomplished: rob our country of its optimism, its swagger, its seemingly limitless potential to solve every problem it has faced, no matter its complexity.

Every presidential administration has one responsibility that is sacrosanct and against which it will be judged, both at the ballot box and in the annals of history. Presidents, above all else, are duty bound to protect the health, safety and welfare of our nation's citizens.

Now is not the time for politics. It is not the time for partisan rallies or MAGA hats. It is not the time for political retribution or finger-pointing,



Brad Karp. (Photo: David Handschuh)

reprising mistakes that may have been made by our government.

It has never been more important than right now to put politics aside and move forward in a bipartisan manner, working together, side by side, across the aisle, deploying every resource at our nation's disposal to craft a solution to this crisis of unimaginable enormity. This coronavirus does not discriminate between Republicans and Democrats, between whites and ethnic minorities, between billionaires and the impoverished, between Americans and the Chinese. It does not carry a passport and stop at a nation's border. Perhaps more than any other crisis in memory, this pandemic reminds

us that the fate of all Americans, indeed the fate of all 7.9 billion souls on this planet, are inextricably intertwined. We need a solution quickly. Time is our enemy. Days matter. Leadership matters. Confidence matters.

We have three battle-tested former presidents, with 24 years of Oval Office crisis-management experience, who should immediately be called upon to work with the administration, on behalf of the American people, to help combat this deadly pandemic and mitigate its devastating consequences.

The health, safety and welfare of America's citizens would benefit from the wisdom, courage and experience of Barack Obama, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton. These former presidents have successfully navigated crises of historic complexity, ranging from national security (the 9/11 attacks), to financial devastation (the Great Financial Recession), to health crises (the AIDS epidemic), and so many more. They understand the needs and psyche of the American people. They understand Washington and the global stage. They understand

our political system and our levers of power. They understand leadership and communication. They know how to get things done and to move forward in the bipartisan spirit that is required today.

We need the voices of Presidents Obama, Bush and Clinton to calm our citizenry, to stabilize our markets, and to restore order. We are facing a crisis of confidence as much as a global health crisis.

For the sake of the American people, and to safeguard our health, safety and welfare, our current president should put politics aside and put America first. He should do what others before him have done in times of crisis and tap into the wisdom and experience of those who have successfully led our country through trauma. Presidents Obama, Bush and Clinton should be enlisted to support the administration and the dedicated public servants and medical experts who are working night and day to protect our country against this coronavirus pandemic, before it is too late.

Brad S. Karp has been the chairman of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison since 2008.