

The Price of Economic Consequence

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Español



The Mexican people should be commended and congratulated by the international community for placing the health and safety of its citizens and the world first, regardless of economic impact. Through the leadership of its government and the strength of its community, Mexico successfully slowed the advancement of the A (H1N1) virus through a Federal public health declaration that required both private and governmental to close their doors to the public and limit physical interaction. In effect, this action shut down the country and its economy for a six-day period. This type of impact in the United States would be detrimental to the economy.

On May 10, 2009, I arrived at Mexico City's Benito Juarez International Airport on a flight from Dallas and was greatly overwhelmed by how the community rallied together to create an ultra-hygienic community to combat this virus. From my first steps off the airplane into the airport, and on to the taxi, hotel, restaurants, offices, and retail stores, it felt as if Mexico had become the most hygiene-conscious country in the world. The owners and employees of the hotels, restaurants, taxis and public venues made my health and safety a priority throughout my six-day stay in Mexico City. As I entered various establishments, I was greeted by health professionals who gave me hand sanitizer, took my body temperature and asked me to fill out health questionnaires and while in close-quartered taxis or in high traffic areas, I was

encouraged to wear a surgical facemask, although I did not feel the need to take this extra precaution with all of the safety measures that had been put into place.

The A (H1N1) Virus is not a Mexican problem; it is a global problem. With the hygienic measures placed by the government, the Republic of Mexico did their part to help stop the progression of the virus. To date, Mexico has experienced 68 deaths and 3,103 confirmed cases of the virus, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Today, this same virus that the press has successfully labeled as a Mexican disease has now spread in the United States to 5,123 cases and 6 deaths in a total of 48 states as well as more than 40 other countries. Other affected countries should be enforcing the same type of preventative measures as Mexico did.

The Panamerican Health Organization stated that without the drastic preventative measures of the Federal and State governments of Mexico, "more than 8,600 lives would have been lost and more than 30,000 hospitalized, severely compromising the public health system." 68 deaths in Mexico is an epidemic; 8,600 lives would have been devastation for the country. The loss of life in the United States and around the world would have been catastrophic without the measures taken by the Republic of Mexico.

In early reporting's, the international media assured the world that the A(H1N1) Virus could kill hundreds of thousands. Instead, the only true virus was a successful media campaign, which halted the Mexican economy, nearly destroying its tourism sector overnight. Dozens of hotels have been closed, and unemployment will continue to rise until Mexico can regain its strength in the tourist sector.

I am not an expert either on health or how governments should be run, and I am not pretending to be so by the publishing of this editorial. However, I do understand real estate and it's affect on the economy.

Mexico's economy has been greatly affected in the past twelve months by the world's economic situation, the publicity of cartel violence, and the most recent A(H1N1) Virus health

scare. None of these things are Mexico's fault. In fact, Mexico's financial system is one of the strongest in the world. Mexico has experienced an increase in cartel violence and lost many of its citizens while fighting to prevent the flow of drugs into the United States. The Federal and State governments of Mexico did an astonishing job halting the spread of the A(H1N1) Virus. Nevertheless, Alfredo Coutino, Latin American economist at Moody's Economy.com, stated that Mexico's economy will contract 5.5 percent in 2009, and one point of the contraction will be due to the A(H1N1) Virus.

As citizens of our countries, we ask our policymakers to be prudent and take risks on the side of caution while protecting and building stronger economies. We obviously do not want to abandon that stance when it comes to public health policy. The decisions made by the Mexican government concerning the health of its citizens and people around the world will account for enormous economic implications in the months to come, but the Mexican government should be proud of the stance it took.

The country of Mexico was brave and admirable, saved countless lives, and created a type of transparency and full disclosure that has been unprecedented at the price of severe economic consequences. Fortunately, Mexico understands crisis, has rebounded from crisis many times before, and will rebound again.

As for the United States, it is time for the leadership of the country to stand up and become good neighbors to the ones who have been great neighbors to the south. "Though shall love their neighbor as thyself" is a quote that extends far beyond religious belief and into practical day-to-day life, just as Mexico has done by investing billions of dollars into our economy, placing their children at risk to fight the United State's war on drugs, and as they did by risking economic implications while putting a halt to the spread of the A(H1N1) Virus.