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Elderly can 'take care of ourselves' as COVID-19 spreads, Texas Lt. Gov. Patrick says

by Diana Chandler , posted Tuesday, March 24, 2020 (one month ago)

AUSTIN, Texas (BP) -- An evangelical politician's intimation that many older Americans would be willing to risk the coronavirus (COVID-19) to save the U.S. economy was widely reported Tuesday (March 24), hours before President Donald Trump said he hopes to reopen the nation's economy by Easter.

Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, 69 and a longtime member of Second Baptist Church of Houston, Texas, told FOX News the U.S. economy is more important than his health, and said he believes many others in his age group feel the same.

"No one reached out to me and said, 'As a senior citizen, are you willing to take a chance on your survival in exchange for keeping the America that all America loves for your children and grandchildren?' And if that's the exchange, I'm all in," he said on Tucker Carlson's show Monday (March 23). "And that doesn't make me noble or brave or anything like that. I just think there are lots of grandparents out there in this country like me."

Jim Richards, executive director of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, told Baptist Press he is praying that political decisions made during the COVID-19 pandemic will honor biblical truth.

"From its inception, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention has affirmed a prolife ethic that affirms the God-given holiness of every human life," Richard said. "The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 says in Article XV that 'We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.'

"We are praying that the decisions made by those in authority will honor biblical truth," Richards told BP. "With that being said, we will 'render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's,' though we are always mindful to render unto God the things that are God's."

Gov. Andrew Cuomo of New York, which according to statistics leads the nation in COVID-19 deaths at 210, tweeted Monday, "If it's public health versus the economy, the only choice is public health. You cannot put a value on human life."

The Southern Baptist Convention upholds the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death, most recently adopting a Resolution of the Sanctity of Human Life at the 2015 annual meeting in Columbus, Ohio.

Messengers voted in the resolution to "call on our churches and all believers to care for the elderly among us, to show them honor and dignity, and to prayerfully support and counsel those who are providing end-of-life care for the aged, the terminally ill, and the chronically infirmed;" and to "pray and work for the repeal of unjust laws and inhumane practices that degrade human life."

Patrick, who describes himself as a conservative politician and a Christian, said he talked with hundreds of people in the past few weeks and many agree with his stance regarding COVID-19, the economy and senior citizens.

"Everyone says pretty much the same thing, that we can't lose our whole country. We're having an economic collapse," Patrick said. "My message is let's get back to work, let's be smart about it, and those of us who are 70-plus, we'll take care of ourselves."

In a FOX News virtual town hall meeting Tuesday, Trump said he would like to have the economy "up and just raring to go by Easter (April 12)."

"It's not built to shut down," Trump said of the U.S. "Our people are full of vim and vigor and energy. They don't want to be locked in a house or an apartment or some space. ... You can destroy a country this way, by closing it down, where it literally goes from being the most prosperous."



Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick (right) appeared on Tucker Carlson's (left) FOX News show Monday (March 23).

Screen capture from Fox News

COVID-19 had killed about 700 and infected nearly 52,000 in the U.S. as of Tuesday, with infections growing daily. Of more than 400,000 people infected globally, more than 18,500 have died and more than 107,000 have recovered, according to a tracking site maintained by Johns Hopkins University at its Coronavirus Resource Center.

Diana Chandler is Baptist Press' general assignment writer/editor. BP reports on missions, ministry and witness advanced through the Cooperative Program and on news related to Southern Baptists'... [Expand Bio]

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