

FBB FEDERAL RELATIONS

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Peter Friedmann's View from Washington DC

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Media and the parties continually politicize everything, including the COVID pandemic, motivated by the rapidly approaching elections – perhaps as pivotal as any in recent memory, with control of the White House and Congress at stake. But now, both parties on Capitol Hill are grappling with some very difficult choices. The answers are not easy for anyone, including the Republican and Democrat legislators

Despite all the name-calling, President Trump's and Speaker Pelosi's coordinated efforts facilitated unprecedented Federal spending, both in the time to move legislation through Congress, and in the sheer amount of money authorized. They worked together for rapid passage of USMCA, far less contentious than when NAFTA was originally passed 25 years ago.

More recently, Congress and the President have chosen to exacerbate the deteriorating relationship between the US and China. Quickly passing and implementing sanctions against China for abuse of ethnic minorities and violation of Hong Kong's autonomy. So again, despite the by-now predictable media narrative, even on trade policy and foreign affairs, Pelosi and Trump, the Democratic House and the Republican Senate/White House, are moving major new policies forward – it could not occur without coordinated joint efforts.

So why does it appear that the pace of coordinated efforts has slowed? Because they are now confronting some very difficult questions which are not political, but rather, scientific and economic. Should the next COVID relief bill continue to pay an additional \$600 a week above the regular unemployment? All recognize it has created a disincentive to return to work for many (those previously earning under \$50,000 dollars/year). To support its narrative of stark partisanship, the media focuses on the Democrats who want to continue the \$600, and on the Republicans who want to eliminate it entirely. But the media misses (or intentionally ignores) the Republicans and Democrats who are working to find ways to extricate ourselves from the situation, perhaps to phase out that \$600 over an undetermined period of time. In fact, some compromise will prevail.

Similarly, there are serious health questions as we approach decisions on reopening schools. Questions as to the physical health dangers of reopening the schools, as well as the social and psychological dangers of not opening schools. Neither party can claim to have the answer, because, they don't.

We remain in uncharted territory. The path forward is unclear.