

## RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 309 TRANSCRIPT

**Steve Skrovan:** It's the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. [Music] Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my co-host, David Feldman. Hello, David.

**David Feldman:** Hello. Great show this morning.

**Steve Skrovan:** Great show this morning but you weren't here last week because you were in DC during the impeachment hearings with your colleague, Triumph the Insult Comic Dog.

**David Feldman:** Yes. We were doing something for Colbert. Very funny. I got to meet a lot of young people working for senators and congressmen and the impression I got was they come to Washington to build their resume. You don't get a sense that these young people working in the Capitol are there for any other reason than resume building. It was a little disconcerting.

**Steve Skrovan:** Oh, interesting. Maybe we'll talk little bit about that in the podcast version. And we also have the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Hello, everybody.

**Steve Skrovan:** Well, on the show today, we're actually going to be talking about two very important issues in the news: impeachment and the Coronavirus, and actually, I'm not sure, but one might be a metaphor for the other. Our first guest is progressive firebrand and former Congressman from the state of Florida, Alan Grayson. I remember Mr. Grayson's famous speech on the House floor where he described the Republican healthcare plan as, "Don't get sick... but if you do, die quickly." One of my favorite lines. Not known to pull many punches, Mr. Grayson has written a book entitled *High Crimes: The Impeachment of Donald Trump*, and the book seems to echo much of what Ralph has said on this program about the many high crimes of Donald Trump: divided loyalties, corruption, conflicts of interest, emoluments violations, pervasive obstruction of justice, habitual abuse of power, campaign misconduct, sexual misconduct, tax evasion, and the list goes on. So, we'll talk to him about that and probably a few other things, including voter suppression in Florida.

Also on the show, we welcome back Dr. Michael Osterholm, [PhD] from the University of Minnesota Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy [CIDRAP]. A couple of years ago, Dr. Osterholm joined us to talk about his book, *Deadliest Enemy: Our War Against Killer Germs*. Today, we turn to the latest viral threat, the Coronavirus with its origins in China. According to the Chinese National Health Commission, as of this week, the total now stands at over 17,000 confirmed cases and 361 related deaths. So we'll find out what this means for those of us in the United States and around the rest of the world with one of the country's foremost experts on infectious diseases. And of course, somewhere in between we'll hear from our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mohkiber, with the latest on what populates the corporate-crime blotter. But first, let's talk impeachment with our first guest, David?

**David Feldman:** Congressman Alan Grayson is a former U.S. representative from Central Florida. In Congress, he spoke out very early against the invasion of Iraq and exposed fraud that had been committed by defense contractors over there. A Harvard-educated lawyer and businessman,

Congressman Grayson served one term from 2009 to 2011 and then another from 2013 to 2017 and now he has written a book about impeachment. It's entitled *High Crimes: The Impeachment of Donald Trump*. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Congressman Alan Grayson.

**Alan Grayson:** Thank you.

**Ralph Nader:** Welcome indeed. What's interesting about this book is how comprehensive it is. Let's just go through the charges that you have discussed about Donald Trump: divided loyalty, corruption, obstruction of justice, other abuses of power, campaign misconduct, sexual misconduct, tax evasion, conflicts of interest and conduct unbecoming a public official. And they lock into a lot of the definitions of high crimes and misdemeanor and bribery articulated by our founding fathers, people like James Madison, George Mason, Thomas Jefferson, and others. Let's start with tax evasion. Can you explain why you think that is an impeachable offense and why he has fought ferociously to keep his tax returns secret?

**Alan Grayson:** Well, it's an impeachable offense because it impeached Harry Claiborne, and removed him from office. What the book does is to review all the cases of federal impeachment, all the cases of state government/governor impeachment, and some English cases as well, and explain what it is that over time has been demonstrated to be an impeachable offense [along with] the simple reason that people were impeached and removed from office because of it. So in the case of Harry Claiborne, he was a federal judge who cheated on his taxes to the tune of a few thousand dollars, nothing like what we see for Trump. And by the way, you may recall this, Richard Nixon had a similar issue. The Judiciary Committee decided to go with other impeachment issues instead of that one, just like they decided to go against an impeachable offense against Nixon for the war in Cambodia. But nevertheless, it's come up from time to time. And it did result in Claiborne's removal. In the case of Donald Trump, just based upon the public information that we have, despite the fact that he won't allow anybody to take a look his tax returns, even apparently people inside the government, the fact is that it's well documented now that he's cheated on his taxes, especially his state taxes to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. And if you could impeach Harry Claiborne for a few thousand dollars, you can impeach Donald Trump for hundreds of millions. And in particular, you can do that for something that he did before he was president. It's clear and in fact it's happened in many cases that people have been impeached for actions before they took office. We've had three vice presidents who faced impeachment and every one of them was facing impeachment for actions they took before they took office. You would remember for instance, Vice President Agnew who was impeached for taking bribes before he became vice president.

**Ralph Nader:** Yes. That's been a pretty clearly decided. In your elaboration on the tax return section, you talk about how he sought to develop property in Moscow in 1987, his deals with Deutsche Bank and other deals with real estate. Isn't it true that the Russian oligarchs trying to protect their cash, basically paid very high prices for Trump's condominiums and he inflated the value of these condominiums and deflated his value of the condominiums depending on what his purposes were, whether to make high sales and profits or whether to reduce his property taxes. Can you describe that a little bit on Deutsche Bank as well?

**Alan Grayson:** Sure. Many people are shocked to realize this, but Donald Trump actually met with Mikhail Gorbachev in the '80s trying to put a Trump Tower in Moscow, and he's been

pitching that either directly or through his cronies now for the past 30 plus years. It's been a preoccupation of his. His son said that they really didn't need bank financing anymore because of all the Russian cash coming in to buying Trump properties. And in one case, and these are rough numbers, forgive me, if it's a little bit off. But in one case, Trump bought a property for \$30 million and sold it to a Russian oligarch for \$100 million. Clearly, the Russian oligarch was trying to cultivate Trump and win favor with him by overpaying for property by \$70 million and Trump, went around telling people that this was just another example of the "art of the deal"--really more like the art of the steal or the art of the bribe would be a better way to describe that. In the case of Deutsche Bank, Donald Trump owed Deutsche Bank so much money at one point; he had borrowed so much money from Deutsche Bank that he was literally the most indebted person in the United States. He had a lower net worth, a higher negative net worth than any other living human being at that point. And then the economy turned down. It was very ugly. We're talking about the Crash of 2008. And Deutsche Bank sued Trump to get back his money. Trump countersued Deutsche Bank, blaming them for the financial crash--a very weak case, I would have to say. They settled up. He never repaid a large chunk of that money and Deutsche Bank went back to loaning Donald Trump billions of dollars. The Russians, clearly, have been stuffing money into Deutsche Bank and laundering it through Deutsche Bank. You don't have to wonder about that. They pled guilty to that and paid an enormous fine for doing that two years ago.

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah. The media hasn't really filed up on this. David Cay Johnston has exposed this. James Henry, who was the chief economist formally of McKinsey and company has raised this. What is wrong with the House of Representatives' investigative capability here? They have all these committees investigating and Nancy Pelosi overruled some of the committee chairs who wanted more impeachable offenses sent to the U.S. Senate, throwing the Republicans on the defensive. Why is she proceeding in that manner? You know, Chairman Nadler wanted the bribery issue. He wanted a broader obstruction of congressional subpoenas in there. He wanted others, and he was overruled and even Eliot Engle and Steny Hoyer wanted broader obstruction brought to the Senate. What's going on there? You served for quite a few years in the House of Representatives. Give us some ideas here.

**Alan Grayson:** Well, all I can do is give you theories from observing her at very close range for six years and having a very productive and positive relationship with her. I think that originally, she was fighting the lost battle. She knew that she'd been on record in the impeachment of Bill Clinton as saying that it was a farce. And when you make statements in a situation like that in real time, then 20 or 30 years later, they may not hold up too well. That's the way it works. So I think that having lived through the Bill Clinton impeachment and recognizing that it was entirely political, she had an urge to avoid a similar situation, even if it wasn't entirely political and entirely justified in Donald Trump's case. I think that's what was originally going on.

I think that since then, she's been trying to find a center of gravity within her caucus and you know, often she will lead. She led on healthcare. She was indomitable even when virtually everybody in the Obama White House wanted to just back off. She said, "no, no, we will get this done". So occasionally, she will do things like that, but she doesn't feel that way with partisan impeachment. Instead, she is basically allowing the caucus to decide what to do. And you have some right-wing Democrats who were trying to drag the caucus in the opposite direction. She knows that she has to have basically the entire caucus behind her to put something like that up. She can't afford to win an impeachment, you know, by 219 to 216. That's not going to look too good. So she's trying to

figure out what it is that she could get through the House with the entire caucus behind her and that's why she's proceeding the way she is.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, this certainly seems to be a situation where she has no qualms about saying, I'm quoting her now about Donald Trump, "He's a crook, a thief, a liar. He should be in prison." And in that case, if she wasn't worried about the so-called Blue Dog Democrats, a dozen of them veering away from her support of broader impeachment offenses, her instinct would be to go all away. She wanted to tie the Republicans up in knots; she used that phrase. But now, she is viewed as a loser. I mean she did get the impeachment through, but the Senate has acquitted Trump and she's left with either another round of impeachment. There are some progressive members of the House who are saying he continues his impeachable offenses. It's not like Watergate in the past. These are continuing impeachment offenses. He's boastful, he's arrogant. He's taunting Pelosi about not bringing more impeachable offenses when she has a majority and saying this because they're all lies and fake news. Do you think that there should be a round two, bringing up some of the well-documented ones, what we call a slam-dunk impeachable offenses like defying more congressional subpoenas as well as spending money in the executive branch not authorized by the Congress. What's your strategic view here and what do you think is likely to happen?

**Alan Grayson:** Well, I have sort of a legal view of this rather than a political view. I think that if the president of the United States is guilty of impeachable offenses, then those impeachable offenses should be brought as impeachment and he should be convicted of them. Just the same way that you wouldn't let a murderer go scot-free, you wouldn't let an impeachable president go scot-free. That's how I see it. That's sort of the perspective of the book to point out that when you have somebody who is doing the things that Donald Trump has done, impeachment is almost pedestrian. When you go through and you see the roughly 30 federal and state officials that were impeached over the past 200 plus years in the United States, and you realize that Donald Trump is guilty of literally every single thing that anybody has ever been impeached for, you realize that there is both a legal and a moral imperative to hold him accountable and the Constitution provides only one way to do that. So that's how I look at it. Other people like her may have a political perspective on it. I don't. I think that it's the case of justice; justice you shall seek, as Deuteronomy says. And the biggest responsibility right now of Congress is to clean the system out. And then that involves defenestrating Donald Trump from office!

**Ralph Nader:** Well, you know, the people that don't have a stake in the Ukraine issue important as it is, would have had a stake in other impeachable offenses like shredding the critical health, safety and economic protections that regulatory agencies have been providing for the American people. And things like actually aiding and abetting climate disruption by booming the fossil fuel industry and never talking about the fastest growing energy source in America because it's the most efficient as well as the most environmentally benign, which is solar energy, wind power and energy efficiency. Never mentioned that in his state of the Trump speech. He boosted the people who are producing the greenhouse gases that are leading to the climate disruptions--the tornadoes, the hurricanes, the wildfires, the floods, the droughts. So if she is waiting for public opinion to grow, Ukraine didn't change the needle, but her other impeachable offenses, which she agrees with, in terms of evidence, would change the public opinion, and it's sort of a catch 22, Alan Grayson. She wants a higher public opinion. She wants it in this 60s and 70s for impeaching and convicting Trump, but she doesn't put forward what Senate committees have already documented that give kitchen-table interests to millions of Americans, patients for example, healthcare workers, for

example, minorities, women's rights. So it's a real puzzle. We'll see in the next two, three weeks whether members of the House will develop a clean number of impeachable offenses surrounding the defiance of subpoenas. That's very clear. You don't need any witnesses; you don't need a prolonged debate in the House. But that is the most basic violation of the Constitution. Without the right of Congress to get information from executive branch, all the other authorities of Congress cannot function. Whether it's appropriations; whether it's tax; whether it's confirmation of nominees; whether it's the war power--you have to have information. And he's the greatest defier of congressional subpoenas in American history. So we'll see in the next two weeks. Now what I want you to talk about next is really pretty astounding to me. There are more women in Congress now, more women in the House of Representatives than ever before. The Speaker of the House is Nancy Pelosi. And they're not making his boastful, savage, sexual predation an impeachable offense. What's your view on that?

**Alan Grayson:** Well, again, I think historically, that's simply wrong. You know, we've had that come up twice. I voted on one of those cases. We've had Eric Greitens removed from office in Missouri just three years ago because of sexual misconduct, sort of a weird S and M-[sodomasochism] type relationship, if you can call it that, with his hairdresser. He was removed from office three years ago as governor of Missouri. And we've had Samuel Kent removed from office for sexual misconduct with two different staffers, unwanted touching. He was a federal judge and I actually voted on his removal from office when I was in Congress. So we've got Greitens crossing the line once; we've got Ken crossing line with two women, and we've got Donald Trump up to the 50s now, and the latest count of the number of women, identifiable women, who have stepped forward and said that "Donald Trump committed sexual misconduct against me" is now in the 50s. And I think that what's holding Congress back is unfortunate. It's sort of, you can call it the "ick factor". They just don't want to deal with it. This is why the Clinton impeachment hearings did not have Monica Lewinsky as a witness.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, let's dig into this a little bit. The Democrats led by Senator Gillibrand, pushed out Al Franken for doing 1% of what Trump has triumphantly boasted about. That's one. They pushed out John Conyers in the House. Both men were, for years, champions of women's rights. That didn't matter because it was overridden by their sexually-inappropriate conduct in the minds of a majority of Democrats. Now they deal with the champion sexual predator in the White House, and we're talking here not just about torts, wrongful injury, we're talking about crimes. We were talking about assault and battery. We're talking about all the statutory crimes that are supposed to prevent perpetrators from attacking people. And why isn't the House of Representatives opening a committee inquiry here? This is extremely serious because he's gotten away with everything in his business and political career. To cite a football metaphor, it's like is the ultimate broken field runner. The law has never caught up with him. The sheriff has never caught up with him. He's avoided being sworn under oath in depositions unlike Clinton who was in a deposition under oath and lied about sex and was impeached. Do you support a congressional inquiry? Do you support... let me put it this way; you're a former Congressman and you know that temperament up there. Do you support a House committee inquiry/investigation into the boastful, savage sexual conduct that he continues to deny and lie about as he is sued by dozens of women under tort law and refuses by delaying these cases month after month from being deposed under oath? Do you support a House inquiry?

**Alan Grayson:** Yes, I do, and I think if the shoe were on the other foot, it would have happened already. The Republicans are relentless in attacking whoever their political opponents might be regardless of the merits. I was on the Foreign Affairs Committee when the Republicans were in charge and they stuck pins in Hillary Clinton literally for years. They did, what she called the vast right-wing conspiracy, attacked her from the time that she was the First Lady until the time that she was the presidential nominee without any merit whatsoever. So if you're talking about a situation like this where the merit is obvious, then again, there was a moral imperative to do the same thing. The other side wouldn't hesitate. They would go at it with guns blasting just like they did over Hillary and the non-issue regarding her conduct in the Benghazi.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, you know, just extending your point here, in 1998, the House Republicans impeached Bill Clinton for lying about sex under oath in a deposition. The polls registered at that time, only 24% of the people supported that impeachment. That didn't stop the Republicans one bit. As the saying goes, the Republicans go for the juggler and the Democrats go for the capillaries. So well, let's put it this way, if he gets away with this, and he's denouncing these women all the time while he's in office, calling them bad names, lies, et cetera. I mean it's a continuing thing with him as he's involved in all this litigation. What will it say when 61% of the women in this country polled by CNN on November 27th, 2019 said they wanted Trump impeached and removed from office? What are the Democrats waiting for in the House of Representatives and what kind of jump-starting is going to be required here?

**Alan Grayson:** Well, hopefully, one of them will pick up a copy of my book and they'll look at the seven articles of impeachment that are in the book, including one that includes but is not limited to the situation in Ukraine. And they'll continue with what they're doing, and it will be good on all sorts of levels. Trump has been on best behavior for the past few weeks leading up until the final impeachment vote in the Senate. He was really reluctant to make a bad situation worse until the Mueller Report came out and quote in his view "exonerated him". Of course, it didn't, but that doesn't matter. Was pervasive in Washington, DC these days. So just basically keeping him under investigation, regardless of the outcome, is a good thing because it gives him a sense that he might be held accountable, and that exercises some kind of restraint over him.

**Ralph Nader:** You know, again and again, the last few weeks--we're talking to the Alan Grayson, former Congressman who's written a book, *High Crimes: The Impeachment of Donald Trump*, published by Waterside Publishing--we've heard maybe a hundred times senators and representatives from both parties say "nobody is above the law"; no person is above the law, not even the president. Well, the president has engaged in the two most crucial violations of that principle. One is obstruction of justice, numerous times and the other is corruption. So why don't you describe those?

**Alan Grayson:** Yes. I mean earlier in the conversation, Ralph, you suggested that he's impeachable because the enormously bad policies like for instance, putting children in prison, to give you one example of a Trump policy that's resulted in constitutional violations. There's been a general reluctance to do that kind of impeachment over the years. What there is no reluctance to do is an impeachment based upon abuse of the powers of office. The term "high crimes" is normally taken to refer to abuse of the power of office, not tax evasion, not sexual improprieties, but actually taking the office and misusing it. And both of the examples that you just gave--corruption and also obstruction of justice/abuse of power--are core examples of what has led to impeachment and

removal from office over the years. We have very close analogies actually to the Ukraine situation. Rob Blagojevich, the governor of Illinois, was impeached, removed from office, in part, because he held back a \$90 million loan to the owner of the Chicago Cubs who happens to own the local newspaper, the [*Chicago*] *Tribune*, unless they fired a reporter he didn't like.

**Ralph Nader:** And he was given a major prison term. He's still in prison.

**Alan Grayson:** That's correct. That's correct. That was one of the charges against Blagojevich. Another governor, Governor Johnson from Texas, was impeached and removed from office because the person who ran against him in the previous election joined the faculty of the University of Texas. His political opponent joined the faculty of the University of Texas and he zeroed out the entire budget for the University of Texas, the largest public institution in the country; zeroed out the entire budget unless they fired him. And then they did fire him. And then he restored the budget. That got Governor Johnson impeached and removed from office. Again, a little bit more visible than what we saw in the Ukraine, but nevertheless, an analogy. Those kinds of abuses of power have in fact gotten people impeached and removed from office, and Donald Trump has done it over and over and over and over again.

**Ralph Nader:** Which you detail in your book, which has been detailed in terms of obstruction of justice by the Mueller Report. Ten examples they gave and the House of Representatives did not pick that up because Nancy Pelosi didn't want to bring in the Mueller Report again. And it seems to an observer, Alan Grayson, that the Democrats way down deep are really afraid of Donald Trump. Number one, because they've done some of the same things. Number two, they're afraid of him singling them out with these disparaging nicknames that the press trumpets without any right of reply by the target of his nicknames. And number three, they are afraid of his ability to marshal riots in the street. I'm convinced that Nancy Pelosi takes his incitation to violence--like if I am impeached, there's going to be riots in the streets, there'll be civil war--very seriously. And if you look at the way he rouses the audiences at these rallies all over the country, you can't say that she's making anything up here. So, I think there's a huge pattern of intimidation that is allowing the most impeachable president in American history, by far, getting away with it. What's your view of the intimidation factor here?

**Alan Grayson:** I think it's pervasive. I don't think that Nancy Pelosi is personally intimidated by him. That's why you'll see her do things like call him a crook, a thief, a liar, as you mentioned.

**Ralph Nader:** Ripping up the speech.

**Alan Grayson:** Ripping up the speech. One of the greatest acts of nonviolent protest in American history.

**Ralph Nader:** I was going to say you've been a successful businessmen, Alan. What do you think in a year or two that ripped-up speech is going to be going for on the collectible market?

**Alan Grayson:** I wish I had gone up to the lectern and just picked it up and walked away with it. I wish I had done it. I was in the room, and I just wish I had done it. [laughter] I wish I'd thought of that.

**Ralph Nader:** Actually, the staff did pick it up.

**Alan Grayson:** Okay. Well, I went, and I tried to speak to her afterward too. You know, she's always surrounded by other people, so I didn't have a chance to congratulate her on doing that and tell her that she's a magnificent human being, which I've told her before. So, she's not personally intimidated by him even though, you know, he tries and there are other Democrats who operate the same way. But there are some and, you know, particularly the Blue Dog Democrats who will run scared all the time until they're defeated and wiped away by the Republicans. There are those who are intimidated by Trump and were afraid he's going to come and campaign against them and so on. And then of course, there's the Republicans. I mean, the fear in his own party, is utterly pervasive; I mean, completely. Only maybe Mitt Romney is showing some kind of independent streak with regard to Trump. And you've got people, I mean, for God's sake, you've got Ted Cruz. Trump humiliated Ted Cruz over the appearance of his wife in the last campaign, the last presidential campaign. You've got [Senator] Lindsey Graham . Trump gave out Lindsay Graham's personal phone number, and Lindsey Graham felt compelled to publicly destroy the phone after Trump gave out his personal number. And these are two of his biggest boosters right now. I mean, the Stockholm Syndrome is pervasive in the Republican Party these days. He's holding them all hostage.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, you know, you make a point-out in your book that anytime he's lost a primary, like the Iowa primary he lost 2016 to Ted Cruz, immediately, he said, "Election fraud! They stole the election. Cruz stole the election." And he'll say that in 2020. Any state he loses or if he loses the election, he'll charge fraud. And to what extent do you think he is depreciating the public confidence in elections that way? And since he says it: lying, because you know the vote count, he lost handily, say in New York or whatever state. That is under your criteria, "conduct unbecoming a public official," which some of the founding fathers thought was an impeachable offense--bringing disrepute on the office of the presidency. Your comment.

**Alan Grayson:** Right. That actually has resulted in the removals of John Pickering and Mark Delahay who were two federal judges--conduct unbecoming the office. In their case, it was pervasive public drunkenness. In his case, you could make the same reasoning with his pervasive lying and his deprecation of American democracy plus his deprecation of the freedom of the press, his deprecation of women and any number of other examples of that. But I think that you're right. He will never accept any sort of defeat. I'm guessing that the Secret Service is going to have to literally carry him out by his arms and legs next January on the 20th to get him out of White House.

**Ralph Nader:** Alan, that's not a farfetched point you just made. There are former military officials who are very worried that he won't go if he's defeated, and he's been praising the military, praising the police. He said openly that as long as they're on his side and he's giving them plenty of money, that his political base is secure. So we have that to be concerned about--his megalomaniac ego, the way he can persuade himself that the election was stolen and that he had to stay in office. What is so surprising to me is how the issue of electability is a pervasive one in the Democratic primary, like who is able to defeat Donald Trump? Hello! Who is able to defeat a chronic liar, a savage sexual predator, an inciter to violence, a bigot racist, followed up with by his own policies, a shredder of health insurance coverage? You just name it on and on and on.

**Alan Grayson:** Yes.

**Ralph Nader:** I mean in the old days, any one of those would have disqualified anybody from running. But when Gary Hart was running for the nomination of the Democratic Party, he was caught on a boat off Florida with a young woman on his lap and he resigned immediately from his campaign. That's how Trump has degraded the standards of behavior for public office. Why are the Democrats falling for that? Any one of their Democratic primary contestants should be able to defeat a person with such gross public policies, gross turning the government over to big business, gross waste of money, gross corruption in office, gross personal behavior that violates criminal statutes. Why are they hung up on this electability? It's like they're inviting descriptions of defeatism.

**Alan Grayson:** Well, you're right. I mean, as I tweeted earlier today, the only way that will keep me from voting against Donald Trump in November is to take my ballot out of my cold dead hands. That's what it would take for many people at this point. That's how most people are. And the Democratic Party feels--they despise him and understandably so. But to answer your question, electability is a concept that is deployed by the right wing of the Democratic Party, the corporate right wing of the Democratic Party to overrun progressive values and progressive candidates. And it works over and over and over again. There are two things that right wingers say in order to try to curry favor and suppress the progressive impulses.

**Ralph Nader:** You're talking right-wing Democrats?

**Alan Grayson:** Right-wing Democrats, that's right. They say that they'll be able to win moderate votes that progressives can't win. In fact, that it's never been demonstrated in real life. It's never ever been demonstrated that that's actually true. And they said that they can raise lots and lots of money from corporate interests that are open to bribing the Democratic Party. So, clearly, objectively, electability is a deeply-flawed concept in practice in politics. And it's a concept that's twisted and exploited by right-wing Democrats for their own purposes. But that doesn't change the fact that people who are going to be able to exploit it will continue to try to exploit it.

**Ralph Nader:** They want to marginalize Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, for example.

**Alan Grayson:** That's right. the "Overton Window" [policies politically acceptable to the mainstream population at a given time].

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah. How far has it gotten these right-wing Democrats? They've lost most of the elections in the last 20 years--the state governors. They've lost the majority [of] state legislatures. They've lost the House, the Senate, the presidency, except for Obama's, eight years. It's not like it's been a successful electoral strategy.

**Alan Grayson:** It's not. You know, I lived through the great Blue Dog apocalypse in 2010 and 2012 when the number of Blue Dog Democrats in the House of Representatives shrank from over 50 to 12 because the Republicans realized that they could explain to the public, you could have the real Republican as your Congressman, or you could have the fake Republican, the Democrat, who is pretending to be Republican. And that was an overwhelmingly successful electoral strategy. You know, I used to be the only white Democratic Congressman between Orlando and Richmond in Virginia. That's how successful they were in wiping out the Democratic Party among Southern whites all through the old Confederacy.

**Ralph Nader:** Let's talk about Florida in 2020. What is the dynamic there and what do the Democrats have to do to pull it out?

**Alan Grayson:** Everyone in Florida has already made up their minds. There is no point in politicking. Florida is completely polarized as an electorate, much more so I think than other parts of the country. I think there actually are, you know, for instance swing voters in Alaska, I think that concept still exists in Alaska. I think there are swing voters in Nevada, but in Florida, you know, you play for the blue team or you play for the red team; one or the other everybody knows which side they're on. So what you have to do is make sure that everyone on the blue team shows up for the game. And at this point, that's somewhat in question. African-Americans in particular in Florida are scratching their heads and wondering why does this have anything to do with me? And that answer will have to be provided between now and election day.

**Ralph Nader:** Do you think the mistreatment of Puerto Rico by Donald Trump leading to a lot of immigration into Florida from U.S. territory, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, is going to help tip more votes against Trump?

**Alan Grayson:** I think whatever you see in that regard, we already saw in 2018. The Hispanics vote roughly three to one in favor of the Democratic Party already outside of the Cuban population in South Florida. And there isn't a lot more to gain in that regard. There's a certain Hispanic Christian vote that is not going to swing to the Democrats no matter what, talking about fundamentalist Christian. And they're aligned the way other fundamentals Christians are in Florida, so there's not a lot of growth opportunities in that regard. The growth opportunities actually would be in registering convicted felons who are now allowed to vote in Florida. There's 1.7 million of them, and if you could actually get that job done, it would be an overwhelming advantage for the Democrats. I actually once polled them. I polled convicted felons, and I asked them, who would you have voted for? Obama or Romney. And more than 60% of them said they would have voted for Obama. Obama actually won Florida by less than 1%. So, the opportunity is there. That would be a major movement in the electorate, but the Republicans has thrown a spanner in the works by saying that all fines and restitution must be paid off before the felons can vote and that is still a process that is unfolding.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, Florida is going to be key in the 2020 election and these elections are incredibly close going back years between the Democrats and Republicans. And the former candidate for the governorship of Florida, Mr. Gillum is devoting apparently all of his attention to getting the vote out for 2020 and is trying to get a lot of allies behind that effort. Well, we're out of time. We've been talking with former Congressman, Alan Grayson. Very outspoken when he was a member of Congress, never censored himself and he is the author of the new book, *High Crimes: The Impeachment of Donald Trump*. It's loaded with histories and photographs and quotes that you can use from throughout history. And once more, give the contact number for getting the book.

**Alan Grayson:** [Impeachbook.com](http://Impeachbook.com)

**Ralph Nader:** [Impeachbook.com](http://Impeachbook.com). Thank you very much, Alan, and I hope you get more media. I'm sure you haven't been on NPR and PBS yet.

**Alan Grayson:** Fair enough. You know, it's interesting what the publishing industry has come to. I have to tell you, if my name were Michelle Obama, then every door would be open to me.

**Steve Skrovan:** Have you thought about changing your name?

**Alan Grayson:** Alan Grayson DBA [Doing Business As] Michelle Obama.

**Steve Skrovan:** Yes. We've been speaking with former Congressman, Alan Grayson. We will link to *High Crimes* at [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com). Right now, we're going to take a short break. When we come back, we are going to find out what's really going on with the Coronavirus. You are listening to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. Now let's hear from our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mohkiber.

**Russell Mohkiber:** From National Press Building in Washington, DC, this is your Corporate Crime Reporter Morning Minute for Friday, February 7, 2020, I'm Russell Mohkiber. The Massachusetts attorney general has fined Chipotle Mexican Grille \$1.37 million for an estimated 13,000 child labor violations and other state Wage and Hour law violations at its more than 50 corporate-owned locations in Massachusetts. The attorney general issued four citations against Chipotle for violating the Child Labor and Earned Sick Time laws, for failing to make timely payment of wages and records violations. "Chipotle is a major national restaurant chain that employs thousands of young people across the country and it has a duty to ensure minors are safe working in its restaurants," said A.G. Maura Healey. "We hope these citations send a message to other fast-food chains and restaurants that they cannot violate our child labor laws and put young people at risk," she said. For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mohkiber.

**Steve Skrovan:** Thank you, Russell. When last we spoke to our next guest, he warned that infectious diseases were much more efficient than bullets and bombs. Now, he's here to talk to us about the real threat from China, the Coronavirus. David?

**David Feldman:** Dr. Michael Osterholm is a professor and director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota. He's the author of the 2017 book, *Deadliest Enemy: Our War Against Killer Germs*. And from June of 2018 through May of 2019, Dr. Osterholm served as a Science Envoy for Health Security on behalf of the U.S. Department of State. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Dr. Michael Osterholm.

**Dr. Michael Osterholm:** Thank you very much. Good to be with you.

**Ralph Nader:** Welcome indeed. You've been right so often and so evidentially based that we're very pleased to have you on the program. Let's go to the origin of this. Somebody asked me the other day, why do so many of these epidemics come from China? Could you describe the agricultural scene and the transmission? And do you know what animal species caused the beginning of this Coronavirus spread?

**Dr. Michael Osterholm:** Okay, well, thank you, Ralph, and first all, I just want to also congratulate you for staying on this topic. You have been really one of those people who has understood for many years that this is not going to end tomorrow in terms of the risk of infectious diseases. So thank you for continuing to highlight this. In terms of this situation in China, what we really have is 1.8 billion people who their food sources include lots of wild or game animals and

exotic species like bats and animals that you and I would not normally have contact with. In addition, much of the processing of these, slaughtering and so forth, occurs in the markets of these very crowded cities, which you're just creating the perfect mixing vessel for viruses and people and disease. In this case, we actually have really quite good genetic information on this virus such that we can say with almost certainty, this thing was like a lightning strike probably in the last two weeks of November when it jumped from an animal species to a human. As far as what that animal species was that caused the direct infection in the human, we're not sure that this is a bat virus over and over again. So it's one that actually has been seen in a very similar form in bats in this very same area of China. So we're quite convinced that that's what happened. Once it jumped into a human, it was very efficient at transmitting by a human to other humans and so that at this point we are no longer really talking about the animal reservoir anymore or the animal source and not that in fact that that couldn't happen again, but it's really human to human transmission that's occurring that's really driving this entire situation now.

**Ralph Nader:** And could it be mutating in a more virulent form as it courses its way through its human victims?

**Dr. Michael Osterholm:** I don't think we have any evidence of that and of course, we always must keep our eyes wide open for it. I think the thing that really is important here is when you look at Coronaviruses, these types of viruses get their name because they have so many spikes on them they look like they have a halo around them when you see them in the electron micrograph. And what we have is a family of viruses for which there are actually several of the viruses that cause the common cold in humans, and they actually are seasonal viruses. They don't cause severe illness. Then you have the other end of the spectrum, the SARS [Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome] virus, the one that caused Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome back in China in 2002 and in 2003, then spread to a number of countries around the world. There we had 8,000 cases and 800 deaths before we were able to basically end that outbreak. And then there were MERS (Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome) virus, another similar Coronavirus that is now we recognize in the reservoir of camels, primarily on the Arabian Peninsula. Again, bats, by the way, were likely the ultimate source for both of these viruses too. With MERS in Arabian Peninsula has been a big challenge. It has been about 2,800 cases of which 30% have died. So, what we're seeing here with this virus, what people have not yet called with a name other than the 2019 Coronavirus, is one that is somewhere in between. This one, however, unlike SARS and MERS, which was still transmissible between people by breathing, was a bit harder to transmit. This one is actually like a flu virus. What I mean by that is, it's a very dynamic transmission. It's already in at least 26-27 countries and they keep adding new ones every day. We're now talking cases in the many thousands and that is actually really a function of just who is getting tested in China right now because we have so few testing locations and kits to actually do the testing. We suspect that there may be 75,000 to 100,000 new cases just this week in Wuhan. And it's clearly spreading through all of China, so this is a very, very dynamic transmission virus spread. The last time we saw something do this was the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic. The key issue here is how severe is the disease? And right now, it's about 1-2% of the population that are infected are dying from it in China. And I think that number has kind of held over the last two weeks. Lots of severe cases, many thousands of severe cases, causing great stress on the healthcare system. There was a very good article this morning in *The Wall Street Journal* that basically talked about that very issue and how stressed the healthcare system is. So I think at this point, we're going to see that unfold around the world. In a given bad flu season in the United States, we expect about 0.1% of people who get

flu to die. This one may be as high as 2% or slightly higher, which is 20 times higher. So over the upcoming months around the world, you can expect to see what's happening in China, I believe, unfold in all those countries.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, how can ordinary people figure out whether they or others have got the flu or the Coronavirus? The flu epidemic in the U.S. has claimed over 20,000 lives just in the last few months and how did they tell the difference?

**Dr. Michael Osterholm:** Well, and that is a very critical question and one that we're not well prepared to do today. As of this morning, today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will be providing test kits to all the state health departments in a number of the large cities so that testing can be done locally. However, even that'll still be limited until they can build up this reagents, the kind of chemistry that you need for the testing that would be available. At some point, we are going to be in a position where we're going to have to ask--when a patient comes into the emergency room, because we don't want them to transmit to others--do they have the Coronavirus infection, or do they have another form of a respiratory disease like influenza? We're just coming off the influenza season; it's still high in many areas, but hopefully, we would expect to see it start coming down in March. But then this is going to pick up and many of us who are in this business projected within the next six to eight weeks, we could see a major uptick of this virus infection around the world and including the United States.

**Ralph Nader:** So it's not going to fade off the way the annual influenza epidemic fades off in March and April.

**Dr. Michael Osterholm:** It isn't. Yes, we're in uncharted territory right now. You know, no one's ever experienced a global epidemic like this of a Coronavirus in the sense that says, "Okay, what's going to happen?" So clearly, if enough people get infected there will at least be some short-term immunity so it won't continue to transmit in that population. But that has all the makings of another 6 or 12 months of widespread activity around the world.

**Ralph Nader:** It could well go into the summer and the fall.

**Dr. Michael Osterholm:** Absolutely. And some people said, well, but it probably won't do well in the summertime because of the fact that warmer temperatures and SARS ended in the summertime in 2003. And I would just say SARS ended not because of the weather, but because of the control measures were able to bring to a disease that was not nearly as infectious as this one. I remind people that we see lots of MERS in the Arabian Peninsula and temperatures are 110 degrees, so you can't say that in fact it's just temperature. So unlike seasonal flu, which tends to follow the winter months of Northern and Southern Hemispheres, I think this is going to be more like a pandemic strain of influenza where that can, for the first year, be a problem year-round. And I don't see anything that's going to change this from doing the very same thing.

**Ralph Nader:** Then people are going to say is a face mask advisable? What kind of face mask and when should they put it on their face?

**Dr. Michael Osterholm:** Well, at this time, we are going to have a very limited supply of the type of face mask, and I hate to use that term, because in our business is called a respirator surgical mask. The loose fitting types of material that you put over your face that you see many people

walking around with are largely useless in terms of stopping the transmission of a virus caused by an aerosol. And this is one we believe is in large part transmitted by an aerosol, just people breathing. And so what you want is the type face-fitting kind of respirator that you can get in the medical area but also even at your hardware stores. They are available in terms of dust control and those will be ones that are the most effective. We're going to run short on these for sure and we're hoping that the only people that plan on using these are those in the healthcare setting that need to take care of patients, people who are in the household with no infected people and not have people just wear them around when there is not a major risk of disease because what they're going to be doing is using up a very limited supply of these that we have. Even if manufacturers today were able to deliver 110% of their manufacturing capacity, we will never ever have enough. And that's going to be one of the challenges we have as we go into the healthcare arena with this virus.

**Ralph Nader:** What's the exact name of the surgical mask?

**Dr. Michael Osterholm:** Actually, it's just called an N95 respirator and you can buy them at any hardware store, pharmacy and there are special ones for the medical area that actually are resistant to fluids like blood and so forth. That's not necessary for these here. But again, I would say to the consumer, you know, you shouldn't need to wear these unless you're out in a public space. And we hope that people who are sick or infected won't be out in those spaces. And we desperately need to have them on our healthcare workers who are basically walking into a viral machine gun every day. And those are the people that we surely want to protect as much as we can. So we hope to have them for them primarily.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, you know, since so many of our active ingredients in pharmaceuticals, I heard the figure 60%, are produced in China and India and exported to the U.S., and so many of our drugs are produced in those laboratories, in those two countries, which are not really under strict Food and Drug Administration inspection, are the equipment that you're talking about produced in China?

**Dr. Michael Osterholm:** Some of them are. Fortunately, we actually have a fairly good capacity in the United States to produce these respirators. That's good. But you hit on a very, very important point. You know, this week, we've seen Hyundai shut down its plants for car manufacturing in South Korea as a result of an inability to move critical parts from China. Our group here at our Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy [CIDRP], has been involved with the study for the past year and a half where we're actually trying to develop a system for tracking all aspects of drug production around the world--meaning everything from the chemical compounds that make up the drug or what's often called active pharmaceutical ingredients to just where is it made. And we brought together a group of international experts over the past months and have developed a list of 153 critical lifesaving drugs that we must have within hours where people die. What's on the crash cart; what's in the emergency room; what's on the rig, the ambulance? And of those 153 drugs, all of them are generic and many of them have critical production aspects in China. Roughly 80% of all the antibiotics made in the world are made in China.

**Ralph Nader:** Do we manufacture any antibiotics in the United States?

**Dr. Michael Osterholm:** Very little. Very little.

**Ralph Nader:** Isn't it a national security issue?

**Dr. Michael Osterholm:** I've been raising this for years, Ralph. In fact, I think the last time you had me on this show was after I had written a *New York Times* Op Ed piece about really strategic defense also has to take into account the microbes and raise the fact that these vaccines and antibiotics and so forth are as absolutely critical to us as are our missiles and bullets and so forth. And yet it gets absolutely none of the same consideration for our strategic welfare.

**Ralph Nader:** That's because it is corporate-managed trade run rampant; lack of federal regulation telling these drug companies, hey, you can't export all your production over to China and India and other countries that are crucial to our national security, our public health. We're not going to give you any kind of tax benefits. And if you don't do it, we'll do it. You remember years ago, when the second leading cause of hospitalization in Vietnam for our soldiers was malaria. The Department of Defense couldn't convince the drug companies to put research in vaccines. So it established its own drug company in Walter Reed Army Hospital and Bethesda Naval Hospital, and they produced three out of four of the new antimalarial drugs at a tiny fraction of the cost that the drug companies are claiming. So what's your position on this? How long are we going to be held hostage by the pharmaceutical giants and say, okay, Uncle Sam will do it if you don't do it?

**Dr. Michael Osterholm:** Well, you know, that's a very good point; a couple of things. First of all, one of the problems is none of the pharmaceutical giants are involved with this. They have basically sold off all of these non-patent drugs and these are basically being made by these small intermediary generic-drug manufacturers, many of which are actually based out of China. So we don't even have a, you might say a free market incentive to have anybody make them. And that's one of the problems we have; we have shortages now because people just aren't even making them, which, you know, would make you think that there is no profit at all to be making them. As far as the government, I think you're right that some of the successes have been there, but we also have some real problems with the vets trying to make vaccines and drugs and just their lack of expertise. And so I think the key message here is that you're absolutely right. We've got to change the system. We've been arguing that for some time. This is why we're doing this very study that I talked about is to show this very point and the implications of, you know, in a sense, it's almost like we would outsource our munitions production to China. Would we outsource the critical security of this country and the medical security of this country to China? And we have. So I think you're absolutely right. We've got to deal with this. This is what we're trying to get the point across. And now as a result of this outbreak, we're actually really getting a firsthand experience of what this means. So this is one of the areas we'll continue to work on besides the what I call the pandemic of Coronaviruses and what they're going to do to our communities. We've also got to learn what we can do.

**Ralph Nader:** On that point, let's go to our first line of defense, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] in Atlanta. Its \$7.2 billion budget is equivalent to three days expenditure by the Pentagon, the Department of Defense. Tell us, what kind of increased capacity should the Centers for Disease Control have? How many inspectors do they have in China in terms of early alert, and how would you shape the budget of the CDC?

**Dr. Michael Osterholm:** Well, first of all, let me just re-echo what you're saying. You're right on point and you know this is worthy of an entire afternoon of discussion. But suffice it to say, we

need to greatly reorient our thinking and support for what we need to do. I mean, we could have had vaccines for this disease already. We knew after the SARS outbreak we had a problem. We knew with MERS, and yet, you know, the long-term commitment was not there. We have many diseases like that. The same thing is true with antibiotics. We've had three companies, largely startups, that have produced new antibiotics for the market that unfortunately, the sales were very low relative to other pharmaceutical products because of the fact we don't want people to use these antibiotics unless they absolutely are necessary and all three of those companies has gone bankrupt in the last seven months. So, we do have major problems in this country, around the world for that matter, and hopefully, this is a wakeup call that says we have got to rethink/ reorder how we're supporting this work.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you very much. We've been talking with Dr. Michael Osterholm, Director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy [CIDRAP] at the University of Minnesota.

**Dr. Michael Osterholm:** I just want to say thanks, Ralph, again, for covering this issue. You know, I'm sure we'll be talking more in the future. This is a very critical point, not just this outbreak, but what are the implications of these global supply chains for critical products and services we need here in this country. We cannot ignore this any longer.

**Steve Skrovan:** We've been speaking with Dr. Michael Osterholm. We will link to his work at [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com). I want to thank our guests again, Alan Grayson, Dr. Michael Osterholm. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call the Wrap Up.

**David Feldman:** Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* when we speak with Sam Pizzigati on the case for a maximum wage.

**Steve Skrovan:** Thank you, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you, everybody. I wished we could have handed out copies of *Fake President* to the members of Congress streaming in for the state of the Trump speech the other day, Congressman Ryan walked out saying “fake speech”.