

## CONVERSATIONS WITH MIKE MILKEN



### **Rick Scott**

U.S. Senator (R-Fla.); former Governor of Florida

*April 21, 2020*

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**Mike Milken: Senator, thank you for joining us today.**

Rick Scott: Mike, it's great to be with you.

**Senator Scott, you served as governor of Florida for eight years. You faced numerous crises during the period of time you were governor, including the Zika crisis. How do they compare with COVID-19?**

Well, this is something I've never dealt with. I had four hurricanes, four mass shootings. I had a hurricane hit our hospitals when I was running a hospital company. We had the Zika healthcare crisis. But what's consistent is you show up every day and you try to

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overprepare and just be granular with everything. Just say, what do I need? And surround yourself with smart people and just solve, solve, solve problems every second.

It takes a lot of hours every day. It takes a team every day. But if you do it and listen to what people are concerned about, you can solve it. With Zika, everybody that was thinking about having a baby or pregnant was worried about their child. And so we over-communicated. I

had a great surgeon general. We went into the community where we thought we had problems. We were clear with what needed to be done. What it allowed people to do is make their own decisions about what risks they were willing to take and what they expected of the people in the community where we had local transmission, as far as cleaning up their neighborhood and stopping the mosquitoes from breeding.

And it worked. You've just got to chip away at every problem. With this one, the biggest thing we've got to chip away at right now, I think, is we've got to figure out this testing. We've got to figure out how we can get robust testing, because it's going to be hard to get this economy going without it.

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**Senator, you grew up in very modest means, and you and I have discussed that having that in your life sometimes prepares you better for the future. But how did your upbringing affect your leadership style?**

I was blessed. I don't know my dad. I have a wonderful, tough-as-nails mom. I told my mom growing up, there is nobody like you. I said I have to make straight A's. I have to be an Eagle scout. I have to go to church all the time. And you told me I had to go get a job at a young age. I said, there's nobody like you that I know of anywhere in my school.

But thank God for my mom because what she taught me was you have to work your tail off, you have to build relationships, and you have to get out there and do something every day.

**Governors and senators, as you know only too well, have different tools and styles that allow them to address problems, crises. What are the biggest trade-offs you've observed in each role?**

You clearly don't have the executive responsibility or opportunity as a U.S. Senator that you do as a governor, or as the president has. So that's the big change. But the other side of it is, anything is doable – because ultimately, even if you have the authority, you have

to do the same things. You have to listen. You've got to get really good information. You have to surround yourself with good people and you have to, especially in a crisis, over-communicate.

I am talking to people from sunup till sundown and just solving their problems. And when I solve their problems, I probably solve it for somebody else.

**Maybe one of the best ways to look at that Senator is take yourself back when you were CEO of a healthcare company, take us back to when you were the governor of Florida. What would you be doing today in each of those roles?**

As a CEO of a hospital company, I had about 343 hospitals, 135 surgery centers. I had about a 285,000 employees. And I basically called people all day and said, how can I help you? How can I solve problems? How are you doing? And I basically did the same thing as governor. When we were preparing for a hurricane, I talked to every sheriff. I talked to every mayor that I could. I talked to everybody that I thought would need something. I talked to the oil and gas industry. When you do that, what happens is people tell you problems.

**Many parts of the country prepared for a surge of the coronavirus that never arrived. They had canceled all elective surgery, so their operating rooms, their orthopedic surgeons, their nurses, their anesthesiologists – none of them were working. There are losses of hundreds of millions of dollars for many of these hospital complexes today. What challenges do you see in front of them this year and maybe next year?**

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***“That's what people do in this country. We come together and help each other. It's a tough time, but we're going to do it.”***

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Well, here's what they've got to do, and I've been talking to them about it because they want to get open. They know that unless something dramatically changes, they have the ventilators they need. They're not going to see a peak that's going to cause them not to be able to take care of the patients. And that's what their belief is right now.

So, what I've recommended them is you've got to, you've got to solve the problem that the federal government raised when they said you shouldn't be doing elective surgery. They wanted to preserve the personal protective equipment: the masks, the gear that you have to wear, the outfits and all that stuff and make sure they had the ventilators. So I said, you've got to be vocal that you have all of it. I've been saying this since probably the first part of March. I've been saying the same to the businesses. You have got to get ahead of what you think you might need when we reopen.

And the other thing I think they've got to do is they've got to make sure that they have a good pipeline to the protective gear they need. So, what I've recommended to them, I said, don't be relying on communist China. Uh, don't be relying on a far away place. You need to work with your local business community because these things can be produced locally and you need to have a local delivery system where you know, whatever happens around the world, you know you have an adequate supply.

On top of that, I believe, and I've got to bill to do this, we've got to have a national stockpile of all the things we need for the next pandemic that's made in America with the ability to ramp up American assets. The companies like 3M, we've got to make sure if we have to compensate them, they've got to be in a position to a ramp up to make sure we have all the protective gear America needs.

**You've gone from Florida, where you were the chief executive, to Washington, where you're one of 100 Senators. Given that this is an election year for president and for many senators and people in Congress, and considering the current political climate right now, how can our government do a better job of getting us through this crisis?**

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Be direct and honest with people. When we had the Zika healthcare crisis, I was clear with what we could do and what you had to do and what local government had to do, so everybody knows their part.

I think the more that happens, I think everything accelerates. So we need more protective gear. We need more testing. And I think we need more information. I think all of us would feel better if we knew for the – as of today, over 26,000 people have unfortunately lost their lives – I think all of us would like to have more information about what were their symptoms. If we did, I think people would take it to say, oh gosh, I have symptoms like that, so I should be more cautious. Because when we don't have information it bothers us more. We need to over-communicate with Americans.

**So you have a hundred senators in the Senate, and in light of what's occurred here in this challenge to our country, how many of them are pulling together to try to solve this problem out of that hundred? Do you see a sense of the Democrats and Republicans pulling together in any way?**

Here's what I've watched as I've talked to my colleagues in the Senate. Everybody is focused on different things, which actually is good because they bring different things to

the table and they have different states. As an example, today I put out a plan of how to get the country back to work. I've put out a variety of things to try to move the conversation along. We had a call today with the president where individuals brought up issues they thought applied to their states, which I think is good.

Right now, it's gone back to being pretty partisan. I'm hopeful that we are able to come together to pass the Cares Act, which is not perfect. There's lots of things in it I don't like. I do like the fact that it helped the people that lost their jobs. I think of my mom when that happens, and her struggles. I like the fact that it helps small business. We came together, even though it wasn't perfect for anybody.

I'm optimistic about the future. This is really concerning. I know so many people that have lost everything, but I know that they are hard-working and they're going to figure that out. And you know what, in our communities and our churches and our synagogues, we're all gonna come together and help people. That's what people do in this country. We come together and help each other. It's a tough time, but we're going to do it. I look forward to the future for my kids and my grandkids and I'm going to have my seventh grandchild today.

**Well that that is quite an accomplishment. Congratulations. You are blessed. And Lori and I, with our 10 grandchildren, we are so blessed, Senator. One of the groups, Senator that I know you've spent a lot of time with, are small business leaders, men and women. Is government doing enough? Are you hearing from them on what they need for help?**

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If you read the papers, what you'd think is, oh, if you just cut taxes everything will be better. The reality is that that's important, to have less taxes and less fees. But even more important is to make it easy for people to get into business, and don't have regulations that don't make any sense. If we do anything to get this economy going again, make it easy for the entrepreneurs in this country.

I think if we make it easy for them, we're going to open up so many businesses and we're going to employ so many people. There's going to be so many new opportunities. It's scary how much this is changing right now. But you can see it even in the last month, people with new business models, with new types of jobs, that are prospering. It's going to be a scary time for a lot of people and just an unbelievably exciting time for others – if we make it easy for them to get into business.

**You had this challenge, after a hurricane, of reopening part of Florida, getting your economy going again and getting the people going again. What items have to be checked off before we can begin really restarting our economy here in the United States?**

People need to feel comfortable that they're going to be safe. I think the FDA has done a great job of giving our doctors more leeway. I think our doctors, our researchers, our nurses are sharing ideas with European doctors and nurses and researchers. I think that's a real positive. It'd be nice to have the vaccine done – it won't be. It'd be nice to have all the therapeutics figured out – they won't be. It'd be nice to have all the testing up. It won't be. But we're going to have gone down the path enough that I think people are going to feel safe to get started, and we're going to learn along the way. I think the key is going to be to take these next four months and really prepare so that if it comes back in the fall, we have figured out how to keep people safe and we don't have the adverse impact we've had these last few weeks on our economy.

**I want to thank you for your service to our country. I want to thank you for your leadership. And I'd like to thank you for speaking to the American people today. And best of luck to you and we couldn't be more excited to hear about your family expansion.**

Mike, you know, anybody who needs anything, my number is (202) 224-5274. We have a plan up and we also have a frequently asked questions section on our website, [rickscott.senate.gov](http://rickscott.senate.gov). I am a full-service Senator. I want to solve problems. So if you know of anything, anybody that needs anything, it doesn't matter if they're in Florida, I will do everything I can to be helpful to them.

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