**Opinion Letter by Ben Graffam, Lakeland**

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Capitalism hasn’t done much to prepare U.S. for a pandemic

Election years generally present the juxtaposition of capitalism and socialism. This year’s comparison includes the coronavirus situation. Some interesting pieces of information should be noted.

A. In 1975, the U.S. had 1.5 million hospital beds. Today there are fewer than 900,000.

B. In 2005, the U.S. made 90% of the surgical masks it used. Today it makes 5%.

C. At no time has there been more than 170,000 available ventilators in the U.S., though it is estimated that 1 million Americans will need one before this pandemic is over.

Capitalism and socialism are pretty well defined by their names: capitalism stands for capital outcomes, for money; socialism stands for social outcomes, for people.

Regarding outcomes, as the U.S. experienced better health, capitalists eliminated beds to save money. As masks became costly to produce, capitalists bought them from foreign sources.

Capitalism supplies what’s demanded, so we do not have enough ventilators to see us through this pandemic.

Socialism is no panacea, but had decisions been made for society’s health and safety, we would have more hospital beds, more surgical masks and more ventilators right now.

Capitalism has done much to help America, but I don’t see that it did much to prepare us for the situation we find ourselves in now.