For Elise

Letter to the editor, [Brunswick Beacon](), 03.28.24

Elise Stefanik, Chair of the House Republican Conference, is auditioning to be Trump's running mate. Her qualification is excusing Trump for everything and denying the reality Americans experienced during Trump's presidency.

On March 6, 2024, using Ronald Reagan's line, Elise asked, "Are you better off today than you were four years ago?" Americans who lived through COVID replied, "Seriously?"

On March 6, 2020, a cruise ship circled off San Francisco after 21 of its 3,533 passengers and crew tested positive for COVID. Experts told Trump to evacuate the ship. Trump balked: "I like the numbers where they are. I don't need to have them double because of one ship that wasn't our fault." Thus began Trump's habit of treating COVID as a PR problem instead of a national security threat.

In January, 2020, National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien told Trump, "This will be the biggest national security threat you face." Trump told Bob Woodward the situation was far worse than he admitted publicly: "You just breathe the air and that's how it's passed. It's more deadly than even your strenuous flus." Trump admitted deliberately downplaying the danger: "I wanted to always play it down. I still like playing it down."

In February 2020, Trump was warned that 2 million Americans could die from COVID. He still downplayed it. He said China had it under control. He said it would go away with the heat in April. He promoted quack cures, like hydroxychloroquine. When he suggested injecting bleach into the body, emergency room calls for poisoning spiked. When the CDC recommended wearing masks, Trump refused and mocked those who did. "I don't wear masks like him," Trump said of Biden.

UCLA research determined that the US could have avoided 400,000 COVID deaths if Trump had mandated masks, social distancing, and robust testing. So, "Yes!" Elise, we're better off without Trump's deliberately deceptive, deadly mishandling of a 100-year pandemic. Thanks for asking!

Nancy Briganti
Carolina Shores