

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Interested Parties

**FROM:** Protect Our Care

**DATE:** December 8, 2021

**RE: Republicans Are Working Overtime to Prolong the Pandemic, Putting Lives At Risk**

While the world is grappling with a new Covid-19 variant, and every reputable public health official is urging that Americans get vaccinated and receive a booster shot, Republican governors, members of Congress, and attorneys general are doing everything they can to slow down vaccinations and undermine other basic ways to keep Americans safe.

Even as [voters in red states](#) are dying from COVID-19 at disproportionately high rates, Republicans are directly contributing to higher death rates and undermining our economic recovery. The contrast is clear: while President Biden works to increase vaccinations and end this crisis, Republicans continue to push misinformation, attack masks and other safety measures, and [go to court](#) to stop vaccine mandates. By slowing down vaccinations, Republicans are prolonging the pandemic and harming the economy in hopes of political gain.

### **Republicans Are Working Overtime to Prolong the Pandemic, Putting Lives At Risk**

As a [new analysis](#) reveals voters in red states are dying from COVID-19 at disproportionately high rates, press reports make it clear that Republicans are directly contributing to higher death rates and undermining our economic recovery. While President Biden works to increase vaccinations and end this crisis, Republicans continue to push misinformation, attack masks and other safety measures, and [go to court](#) to stop vaccine mandates. By slowing down vaccinations, Republicans are prolonging the pandemic and harming the economy in hopes of political gain.

### **REPUBLICANS ARE PLAYING POLITICS AND ENDANGERING THOUSANDS OF AMERICAN LIVES**

#### ***Republicans Are Playing Politics With Peoples' Lives***

**The Guardian: "Republicans Have Chosen To Be On The Side Of The Virus."** "Eric Schultz, a communications strategist who worked in the Obama administration, told the Associated Press: 'It's clear that Republicans have decided that the fate of the Biden presidency is tied to Covid. And Republicans have chosen to be on the side of the virus.'" [The Guardian, [12/5/21](#)]

**CNN: "Republican Officials Have Elevated Exploiting The Pandemic Over Ending It."** "Just as they've elevated voting restrictions over the protection of democratic elections, Republican officials have elevated exploiting the pandemic over ending it. While GOP attorneys general bogged down vaccine mandates in court, GOP senators last week threatened to shutter the

federal government to block them – even as some Republicans slam Biden for failing to contain the pandemic. They seek approval from rank-and-file Republicans, who represent the locus of vaccine refusal. Fully 60% of unvaccinated Americans, according to a recent Kaiser Family Foundation survey, identify with the GOP. That proportion increased from 42% in April even as the pandemic killed Republicans in disproportionate numbers.” [CNN, [12/5/21](#)]

### ***Republicans Are Siding With Anti-Vaxxers and Pushing Conspiracy Theories***

**Huffington Post: The Vast Majority Of Republicans Believe One Or More False Statements About Covid-19 And Vaccines.** “Republicans are now the largest single demographic group of the unvaccinated in America...Polling by the [Kaiser Family] foundation revealed that Republicans are far more likely to believe false statements about COVID-19 and vaccines. All but 6% of Republicans believe that one or more false statements about COVID-19 and vaccines might be true, and 46% believed four or more statements might be true.” [Huffington Post, [12/5/21](#)]

**NPR: Inside The Growing Alliance Between Anti-Vaccine Activists And Pro-Trump Republicans.** “As America heads into midterm elections next year, the political right and the anti-vaccine movement are drawing ever-closer together. It’s an alliance that promises to give both sides more power, but the cost is potentially thousands of American lives.” [NPR, [12/6/21](#)]

### ***People In Red Counties Are Dying At Disproportionate Rates As A Result Of Republicans’ Failed Leadership***

**NPR: Pro-Trump Counties Now Have Far Higher COVID Death Rates. Misinformation Is To Blame.** “People living in counties that went 60% or higher for Trump in November 2020 had 2.7 times the death rates of those that went for Biden. Counties with an even higher share of the vote for Trump saw higher COVID-19 mortality rates. In October, the reddest tenth of the country saw death rates that were six times higher than the bluest tenth.” [NPR, [12/5/21](#)]

**Washington Post: “Many Of The States That Saw The Biggest Increases In Per-Capita Deaths In The Second Half Of The Pandemic Are Ones That Trump Won Handily Last Year.”** “Many of the states that saw the biggest increases in per-capita deaths in the second half of the pandemic are ones that Trump won handily last year.” [Washington Post, [12/1/21](#)]

**The Hill: People In Pro-Trump Areas Nearly Three Times More Likely To Die From COVID-19.** “Liz Hamel, KFF’s vice president of public opinion and survey research, told NPR that political affiliation is now the strongest indicator of someone’s vaccination status. ‘An unvaccinated person is three times as likely to lean Republican as they are to lean Democrat,’ said Hamel. ‘If I wanted to guess if somebody was vaccinated or not and I could only know one thing about them, I would probably ask what their party affiliation is.’” [The Hill, [12/6/21](#)]

**CNN: Risk Of Dying From Covid-19 Is Higher In Red States.** “Since vaccines have become widely available, the average risk of dying from Covid-19 is more than 50% higher in states that voted for President Trump in 2020 than it is in states that voted for President Biden.” [CNN, [12/2/21](#)]

## **Six Ways Republicans Are Prolonging The Pandemic**

- 1. Paying People Not To Get Vaccinated:** [Republican governors and legislators](#) in Florida, Iowa, Kansas and Tennessee have changed their unemployment insurance rules to allow workers who are fired or quit over vaccine mandates to receive benefits. In Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis has offered [cash bonuses](#) to unvaccinated police officers who quit or are fired from police forces in other states. Recent [CDC data](#) shows that unvaccinated adults are nearly six times more likely to test positive for Covid-19 and 14 times more likely to die from the virus compared to vaccinated individuals.
- 2. Lawsuits Against Vaccine Mandates:** More than two dozen Republican attorneys general are waging war on vaccine and testing mandates on at least three fronts.
  - [At least 26 states](#) have filed suit against OSHA’s rule protecting 84 million American workers with a vaccination or testing requirement. The [AMA](#) and other respected medical and public health experts have warned that ending the OSHA rule would “severely and irreparably harm the public interest.”
  - [More than 20 Republican AGs](#) are seeking to overturn CMS’s mandate that health care workers be vaccinated against Covid-19. In the first year of the pandemic, [more than 3,500](#) health care workers in the US died and tens of thousands more were infected and sickened.
  - [Nearly two dozen Republican attorneys general](#) are working to block the administration’s vaccination requirements for federal contractors.
- 3. Blocking Vaccine And Testing Mandates:** The [National Academy for State Health Policy](#) found that nine GOP-controlled states have passed laws requiring exemptions for the federal vaccine mandate, or banning private companies from requiring vaccination altogether. Several states have made it easier for workers to claim exemptions from vaccine mandates, allowing them to decline on philosophical grounds or requiring businesses to accept all requests for religious or medical exemptions without proof.
- 4. Congressional Attacks On Vaccines:** Republican members of Congress have filed [at least 20 bills](#) to block or roll back vaccine mandates. [Every Republican member of the Senate](#) has joined an effort led by Sen. Mike Braun to overturn the federal vaccine or test mandate using the Congressional Review Act. Republicans like [Rep. Nancy Mace](#) and [Sen. Ron Johnson](#) have taken to the airwaves on Fox News and the Senate floor to promote the false idea that “natural” immunity acquired by getting sick is better protection than immunity provided by vaccines.

5. **Bans On School Mask Mandates:** At least [eight Republican governors](#), including Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas and Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida, have banned mask mandates in schools often putting them at odds with their own constituents and local school boards who want to protect students and teachers. A [study in Arizona](#) found that mask mandates work and schools that required all students and staff on campus to wear face masks were 3.5 times less likely to have a coronavirus outbreak during the Delta variant surge than schools that didn't implement masking.
6. **Rolling Back Local Public Health Powers:** Republicans in at least [26 states](#) have passed laws that permanently weaken government authority to protect public health. In Arkansas, legislators banned mask mandates of all kinds. In Idaho, elected county commissioners can now veto countywide public health orders. And in Kansas and Tennessee, school boards, rather than health officials, have the power to close schools.

### **The OSHA Vaccine Or Testing Requirement Protects Workers**

COVID-19 is the single greatest occupational health crisis for American workers since the creation of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), claiming the lives of more than [790,000](#) Americans and continuing to infect more than [80,000](#) individuals each day. The emergency standard requires companies with 100 or more employees to ensure that their workers are vaccinated or tested weekly – a move that will protect [84 million](#) workers and the communities they live in.

OSHA's vaccine or testing requirement will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, yet Republicans have launched a highly-partisan legal attack on these safety measures, threatening America's entire strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. In November, partisan judges on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals' temporarily blocked OSHA's standard, and the case will now proceed to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals for further review and is expected to be ultimately decided by the Supreme Court. Experts agree that this lawsuit not only threatens the safety of American workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also OSHA's ability to protect workers during future emergencies.

Vaccinations continue to be a safe and effective tool, essential to ending the pandemic and preventing illness and death. OSHA's vaccine or testing requirement will protect 84 million workers and create the safest possible workplaces by preventing the spread of COVID-19 on the job.

## **Twelve Leading Medical Organizations File Amicus Brief In Support Of Vaccination Requirements For Healthcare Workers**

Democracy Forward filed an [amicus brief](#) signed by the American College of Physicians, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Chest Physicians, American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics, American Geriatrics Society, American Medical Women's Association, American Society for Clinical Pathology, American Society for Echocardiography, American Society of Hematology, American Thoracic Society, and American Lung Association.

According to [Democracy Forward](#) "The brief explains that COVID-19 poses a grave danger to the health of medical facility patients and staff. Failing to implement CMS' vaccine requirements would 'severely and irreparably harm patients and undermine the public interest.' Outbreaks risking patient health are still happening: in an Iowa nursing home during October 2021, for example, 370 residents and staff became infected."

### **Special Online Resources**

[FACT SHEET: How The OSHA Vaccine Or Testing Requirement Protects Workers](#)

[Five Reasons Why The Lawsuits To Block The OSHA Standard Are Legally Flawed](#)

[Former OSHA Officials, Medical Professionals, and Public Health Experts Agree:](#)

[OSHA Can and Must Protect Workers From COVID-19](#)

[Status Of Lawsuits on Federal Vaccine Requirements: December 8, 2021](#)