

Biden is failing on concerns of vaccine hesitancy

other
VOICES

By **MARC A. THIESSEN**

The Biden administration's COVID-19 vaccination effort is faltering. Just 37.8% of Americans have received both doses—well short of President Joe Biden's 70% goal—and the vaccination rate in the United States has slowed from its April peak. We've now reached the point where everyone eager to get their shot has gotten it. The challenge has shifted from ensuring supply meets demand to creating demand by convincing vaccine-hesitant Americans to get their shots.

The good news is that, according to Gallup, only about 16% of the unvaccinated don't trust vaccines in general. The rest are persuadable. So why are they hesitating? Gallup found that 24% are waiting to confirm the vaccines are safe, 21% are in no rush because they are not afraid of getting seriously ill from COVID, and 17% are concerned about the speed with which the vaccine was developed. It's the job of our elected leaders to address these concerns—and they are failing miserably in doing so.

The first step is for our fully vaccinated leaders to start acting like it. President Biden continues to undermine public confidence in vaccines by wearing his mask outside when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says he does not even have to wear it inside. Vice President Kamala Harris was recently pictured kissing her husband through a mask, even though both are fully vaccinated.

All of this signals a lack of trust in the effectiveness of the vaccines. If you thought it was irresponsible of President Donald Trump to refuse to wear a mask, it is equally irresponsible for Biden to wear one now that he has been vaccinated. If he wants hesitant Americans to get their shots, Biden needs to make clear that when they do, they can ditch their masks, stop social distancing and live their lives again.

Second, we need to change the way we talk about the vaccines. Politicians know that in any campaign, words matter. Republicans failed for years to get rid of the "estate tax" but found more success as soon as they rebranded it the

"death tax." The words we choose can change public perceptions—sometimes dramatically.

The same is true when it comes to vaccines. People who are vaccine-hesitant are not going to be convinced by appeals to get "vaccinated." Why not urge them to get "immunized" against COVID-19 instead? The terms are interchangeable and familiar to most Americans. Every parent has had to fill out their children's "immunization record" for school. But unlike vaccination, immunization focuses on the result of getting your shot—immunity. And who doesn't want to be immune to COVID-19? It won't convince die-hard anti-vaxxers, but it certainly could make a difference with the hesitant but persuadable majority.

Third, where are the ads for the vaccines? We're inundated with TV commercials from pharmaceutical companies. So why are Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson not flooding the airwaves with similar ads touting the life-changing impact of their COVID-19 inoculations? Answer: The government won't let them. The FDA bars companies from marketing drugs approved under an emergency use authorization without commissioner approval. They've been allowed to do some limited, generic ads touting the value of getting vaccinated and the power of science, but they can't mention their products by name or create anything resembling the slick, multi-million-dollar campaigns for other drugs.

This is insane. Barring marketing of emergency use drugs may make sense when they are approved for limited distribution to a discrete population. But the federal government has set a goal of inoculating every eligible American against COVID-19. It's in the national interest to allow pharmaceutical companies and their well-paid ad agencies to inundate the airwaves with creative campaigns selling their life-altering effect of the vaccines. If anything, the Biden administration should be spending some of the \$1.9 trillion it recently secured from Congress to support those efforts, instead of restricting them.

The Biden administration did a good job of accelerating delivery of the vaccines, but it is doing an awful job selling them. Through bad example, poor language and needless regulation, it is hindering the vaccination effort COVID-19 and with it the end of the pandemic.

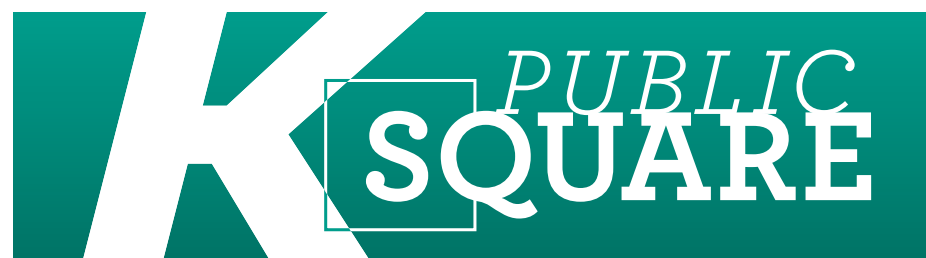
(Washington Post)

was cut.

We will move forward immediately to rehire nine firefighter/paramedics positions. Doing so will guarantee a fire engine in service 24 hours a day, which means we can respond to emergency calls faster.

We will continue to report back as these positions are filled and when the engine is back in service. Your support makes this possible, and we are extremely grateful. Thank you again for partnering with us to save lives and property.

**Kyle McMann, Fire Chief
Marion County Fire District #1**



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Memorial Day

Memorial Day is Monday, May 31, a day when Americans honor the men and women who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in duty to their country.

Across the nation flags will be solemnly placed at the gravesites of those who died while in uniform. It doesn't matter if they died in battle on land, sea or air, or if they perished in a tragic accident—all those souls have earned the respect of their fellow citizens who live under the freedoms they swore to protect.

How can we civilians mark Memorial Day 2021? For those who have family members interred at a national or other cemetery, visiting the gravesite with flowers, to pause and reflect is a personal way to honor the fallen soldier. Those whose families are untouched by military death can honor America's fallen military members with a few minutes of remembrance.

Some see Memorial Day as a three-day weekend. At gatherings, people joining together for recreation can be part of the national day of memoriam by imparting the history of the sacrifice of our armed forces to the children in attendance.

On the local level, Keizerites can pay their respects by visiting Pvt. Ryan J. Hill Park at Keizer Station, named in

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honor of our city's only casualty of the war in Iraq.

The men and women who are called to serve their country and give their lives are to be honored and respected. When an American dons a uniform, our hope is they will return home safely. Unfortunately, that doesn't always happen. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have fallen while serving. We will never forget them. —LAZ

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or **guest column** (600 words),

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Letters

Thank you MCFD#1 voters

To the Editor:

Marion County Fire District #1 wants to thank residents for passing a local option levy in the recent election. This revenue is critical to reduce response times that were increasing as a result of personnel layoffs last year when funding

KEIZERTimes



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