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COVID whiplash

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown is responding to the state's COVID-19 resurgence with the delta variant. She ordered this week that mask mandates in public indoor spaces are back in place.

People are not pleased with the ever-changing requirements. Mandates to wear a mask and getting a vaccine violates personal liberties, some say. Some segments of society say that Americans are free to take risks even if it endangers their live or the lives of others. People take health risks every day with choices that are harmful.

The number one role of government is the protect the people and keep them secure. If the United States was facing imminent attack from a foreign source, the people would be up in arms if government did nothing in response.

There are more than a few social media posts from COVID- deniers and anti-vaxxers, laying in a hospital bed, hooked to machines imploring people to take COVID-19 seriously and get a vaccine.

Whatever her faults, Gov. Brown and her health advisors are making the decisions they believe is best to stem the tide of new

Editorial

cases of infections and hospitalizations. It is expected that if Oregon remains on its current trajectory, there will be a shortage of up to 500 hospital beds by September. That should alarm everyone.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said for months that most people wore a mask in public settings and received one of the vaccines, we could see the end of pandemic. There are reports that some who have been fully vaccinated got sick with COVID, but their condition is not to level of requiring hospitalization.

Americans are free to make choices they feel is best for them. For some that means not allowing a COVID vaccine to go into their arm. For more than 150 million Americans that choice is to be vaccinated.

COVID is not going away. We can't know what other variants other than delta are lurking in our future. That's why the governor is making decisions to keep the people of Oregon safe. That is her job. —LAZ

Harassing the unvaccinated

By MARC A. THIESSEN

In recent weeks, President Joe Biden has been trying to insult unvaccinated Americans into getting immunized. He has told the vaccine-hesitant that they are “not nearly as smart as I thought you were,” that they are responsible for the pandemic, that they are refusing to do their patriotic duty, and that Americans’ patience with the unvaccinated is “running thin.”

Here’s a better idea: stop harassing them.

First of all, no one has ever been insulted into changing their mind. Telling the vaccine hesitant they are stupid and unpatriotic is not likely to convince them to get their shots. If anything, it will have the opposite effect, increasing resistance to the vaccines. According to former American Enterprise Institute president Arthur C. Brooks, “if you insult someone with whom you disagree, the odds are greater than 3 to 1 that the person will harden his views against your position.”

Second, the unvaccinated minority do not pose a serious threat to the rest of us. So far, 165 million U.S. adults have been fully vaccinated, and 70% have now had at least one shot, which research shows is highly protective after just two weeks. This means 192 million in total now have vaccinated immunity. Breakthrough infections are still rare—*NBC News* reports that there have been about 125,000 cases in 38 states, which represents a rate of about 0.07%. And according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as of Aug. 3, only 954 vaccinated Americans have died of COVID-19, and only 4,641 have been hospitalized. Most of those are elderly, immunocompromised or have co-morbidities making the vaccines less effective.

What about the risk to children, many of whom are ineligible to be vaccinated? Unvaccinated children are at similarly low risk for serious outcomes as vaccinated adults. CDC data show that just 406 people under 18 have died with a COVID-19 diagnosis code in their record and the CDC has no idea whether COVID-19 was incidental or causal in their deaths. One study found zero mortality in children without pre-existing conditions. Healthy children are not a serious risk—and healthy vaccinated adults (such as teachers) are at near-zero risk from them.

What this means is that if you are an otherwise healthy vaccinated person, you are effectively bulletproof against serious illness. While we should encourage unvaccinated Americans to get immunized for their own sake, they pose no real danger to the rest of us.

So, stop harassing them. The left believes in “my body, my choice” when it comes to abortion, but not when it comes to vaccination. Unlike abortion, vaccine hesitancy poses virtually no risk of death to others who are otherwise healthy human beings. Refusing to get vaccinated may be a bad health choice, but people make bad health choices all the time. They smoke, drink to excess, abuse prescription drugs and engage in all sorts of risky behaviors.

If the Biden administration wants



to convince the vaccine-hesitant to make better choices, the best thing they could do is speed full approval of the vaccines. A Kaiser Family Foundation survey found that 44% of unvaccinated Americans would be more likely to get a vaccine once it is fully approved by the Food and Drug Administration. But right now, the FDA may not decide on full approval for the Pfizer vaccine until January 2022. The agency has not even begun priority review for the Moderna vaccine, while Johnson & Johnson has not filed for full approval. That is ridiculous. With 347 million doses administered, the FDA has never had more safety and efficacy data on a new vaccine. It’s hard to convince wary Americans to put a vaccine into their body if the government won’t give it full approval.

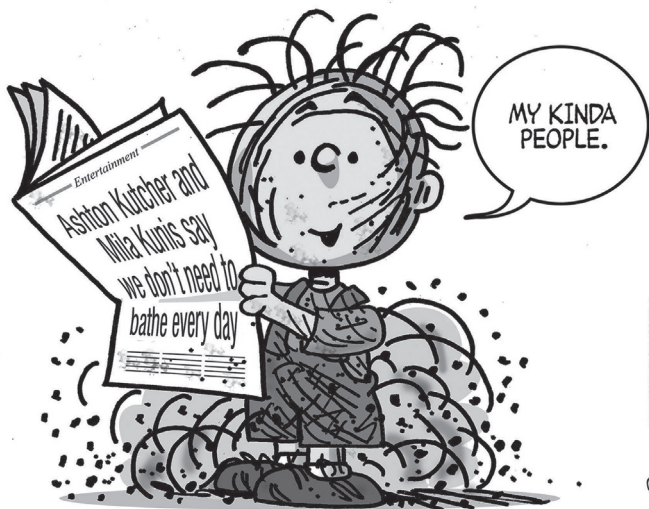
Reimposing covid restrictions on vaccinated Americans also feeds vaccine hesitancy. According to a new AP-NORC poll, 64% of the unvaccinated have little to no confidence the shots are effective against variants such as delta, when in fact they are highly effective. Forcing vaccinated Americans to wear masks only feeds that misperception.

Another bad idea is vaccine mandates. The Biden administration is now requiring federal workers to get vaccinated and encouraging private businesses to do the same. This will only spark greater resistance, particularly among those who see mandates as an infringement on their individual liberty. The last thing we need to do is encourage more Americans to see vaccine resistance as a political statement against an overbearing government.

The nonimmune population is rapidly dwindling. There are now fewer than 93 million Americans who are eligible for shots but have chosen not to get them, but that does not mean they are unprotected against the virus. Marty Makary, a physician and professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, estimates that up to half of that population has been infected at some point with covid-19 and thus have natural immunity from prior infection. At that rate, as many as 46 million unvaccinated Americans have natural immunity, which a new Israeli study just found is 6.7 times more powerful than vaccinated immunity. As more of the unvaccinated catch the virus (at a rate as high as 1 million a day) more and more are recovering and becoming immune.

The vaccines are a modern medical miracle that have saved us from the worst pandemic in human history. Some will never get them, and that is their choice. Free people are free to be wrong. The rest are persuadable. The way to do so is not with mandates or insults. Approve the vaccines and let them decide.

(Washington Post)



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