

# Wear A Mask. The Life You Save May Be Your Own

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President Biden has urged states to reinstitute mask mandates [1], as cases remain at high levels in some states that are lifting these requirements [2]. Will that reduce disease? The evidence seems clear. States with Republican governors had 22.3 percent more Covid-19 cases than states with Democrat governors [3]. Eleven of the twelve most infected states [3], based on population, are led by Republicans. But, does a leader's political party influence Coronavirus infections? Not likely, as a closer look reveals a leader's political party is unlikely to be the reason for this difference. Unbeknownst to the nation, the United States has been involved in a natural study of the benefit of mandating facemasks.

Research shows one of the most effective ways to prevent Covid-19 disease transmission among those not vaccinated is by wearing a facemask [4]. With this in mind, twenty-three of twenty-four Democrat states and the District of Columbia mandated facemasks, but just twelve of twenty-seven (44%) Republican governors have mandated wearing facemasks in public [5]. Thus, Democrats have had a significant edge in requiring mask-wearing.

By analyzing whether or not there is a mask mandate [5], the differences in disease rates between Democrat and Republican leadership melts away. By mid-February, before mask mandates began to be eliminated, thirty-four states and the District of Columbia with mask mandates average 24,000 less per capita COVID-19 cases per million populations [3] than those states without a mask mandate.

The case involving Kansas Governor, Democrat Laura Kelly is instructive. After Governor Kelly made a mask mandate, counties were able to opt-out [6]. As time went on, Covid-19 incidence decreased in the 24 counties observing the mask mandate but continued to rise within the 81 counties rejecting the instruction. Today, Kansas [3] looks like all other non-mask mandated states, as Covid-19 does not obey county lines.

If a mask mandate had been implemented in all previous non-mask mandated states, it is reasonable to assume there would have been a drop in infections within those states. This would have lowered Covid-19 cases in the 16 non-mask mandated states by over 1.75 million infections based on this data.

While the vaccine rollout has increased dramatically under the Biden Administration, our main public defense remains mask-wearing [7], until we achieve "herd immunity." An N95 facemask is the most protective and recommended for healthcare workers [8]. We disagree with the CDC's recommendation to leave N95 facemasks to healthcare providers [8]. Rather, we agree with Dr. Joseph Allen of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health [9] for public use of inexpensive N95 masks. If the public wore N95 masks, it would help protect healthcare providers by reducing disease transmission, hospital caseloads, and deaths. If 70% or more U.S. citizens wear these masks [10], we could immediately protect most American lives, schools, and our economy before Covid-19 variants result in an uncontrolled surge [11] in Coronavirus cases and deaths.

With trillions being spent on the Coronavirus pandemic, the United States should immediately engage the Defense Production Act [12] to produce N95 masks for everyone. Politics won't change infection rates, vaccines and masks will.

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