

Six Ways Republicans Are Prolonging the Pandemic By Playing Politics With People's Lives As Omicron Variant Spreads Across the Globe

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.

SIX WAYS REPUBLICANS ARE PROLONGING THE PANDEMIC:

- 1. Paying People Not To Get Vaccinated:** [Republican governors and legislators](#) in Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Arkansas 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. [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 Requirements:** 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.