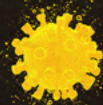




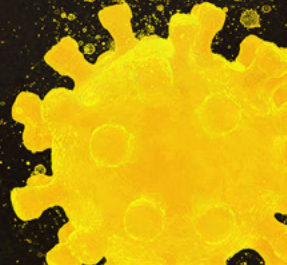
New Report

Year One of RFK Jr., Public Health Enemy #1

February 2026



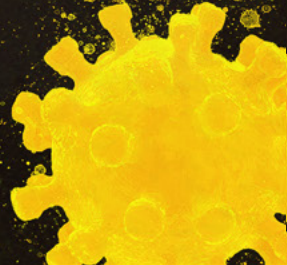
**PUBLIC HEALTH
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Introduction

During his first year as Donald Trump's Secretary of Health & Human Services (HHS), Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has been a wrecking ball for American public health. His tenure has been defined by mass firings, weaponized incompetence, and a deliberate effort to turn trusted health agencies into engines of anti-vaccine propaganda. RFK's anti-vaccine agenda is now in motion: he's breaking the promises that got him confirmed, hollowing out the infrastructure that makes vaccination easy and routine, and elevating conspiracy theorists who see lower vaccination rates as a feature, not a bug. Across HHS, the CDC, and the FDA, he and Trump have purged experts, stacked key posts and advisory bodies with cranks, slashed research, cancelled life-saving clinical trials, and sabotaged basic tools like vaccines.gov, creating chaos inside agencies and confusion for families, clinicians, and states.

Inside HHS, the strategy is chaos by design. Tens of thousands of staff targeted for layoffs, "fired-then-rehired" whiplash, a hollowed-out NIH struggling to fill half its institute directorships, and a CDC that employees now describe as a "living hell" where scientists are surveilled, muzzled, and pushed out just as measles, whooping cough, and other preventable diseases are roaring back. At the FDA, grifters and anti-vaxxers are now in top positions, chilling internal dissent and green-lighting junk science about supposed vaccine harms. Meanwhile, Kennedy and Trump have torn down U.S. global health capacity, pulled out of WHO, and left state and local health departments scrambling after whiplash cuts and partial restorations of core grants. In the name of Make America Healthy Again (MAHA), they have canceled and censored research across NIH and NSF, shut down clinical trials mid-stream, and targeted "DEI," women's health, LGBTQ+ care, fluoride, Tylenol, and even 5G wireless signals, systematically dismantling the science and programs that keep people healthy and alive.



The centerpiece of RFK Jr.'s tenure is a full-scale war on vaccines. Kennedy has fired and restacked key advisory committees with anti-vaccine activists, slashed the childhood vaccine schedule, deleted the CDC's clear statement that vaccines do not cause autism, sabotaged access to resources, and turned COVID-19 and flu guidance into a confusing, high-risk "choose your own adventure" while preventable infections surge and our country's measles elimination teeters on the brink. Kennedy's first year in office saw the first measles deaths in this country in a decade and record levels of flu activity, while HHS sat on its hands and RFK Jr. traveled the country promoting bogus measles treatments rather than vaccination. At the same time, MAHA-aligned groups are driving statehouse bills to gut school mandates, pushing unproven and possibly dangerous treatments, and exploiting Kennedy's federal vaccine schedule changes to weaken state requirements, leaving pediatricians, families, public-health officials, and mainstream medical groups scrambling to build workarounds to protect public health.

RFK Jr.'s record is toxic. Polling shows cratering confidence in federal health leadership, Kennedy as one of the least popular figures in the cabinet, and large majorities continuing to side with routine childhood vaccination and vaccine research. RFK Jr.'s tenure is a vivid warning label on what happens when you hand over America's public health infrastructure to an anti-vaccine ideologue with no science or medical background: chaos, cuts, conspiracy theories, and more sickness and preventable deaths for American families.



RFK Jr's War On Vaccines

One Year Of RFK Jr: Broken Promises, Dangerous Declines In Vaccination Rates.

RFK Jr. only got confirmed on the strength of [promises](#) to Sen. Bill Cassidy that he would protect vaccine access, respect the agency's expert-driven process, and keep the CDC's science-based autism messaging intact. One year in, he has broken every promise, firing vaccine advisory committee members, slashing the childhood schedule, and forcing the CDC to walk back the core statement that "vaccines do not cause autism." The results are clear. The CDC's latest data show kindergarten vaccination rates [fell again](#) during the 2024–25 school year, with coverage for measles, mumps, rubella, and other shots declining in more than half of states compared with the previous year. Exemptions from one or more vaccines hit a record 3.6 percent of U.S. kindergartners — up from 3.3 percent the year before — and at least 17 states are now above 5 percent. Only about 28 percent of counties still have 95 percent measles coverage in kindergarten, the level pediatricians say is needed to protect classrooms, and those numbers are [sliding faster](#) under Trump and Kennedy than they were before they took office.

RFK Jr. has gone after COVID-19 shots from both ends — shrinking who is advised to get them and kneecapping the science behind next-generation vaccines.

Cutting-Edge Research Cancelled. Kennedy has gone after COVID-19 shots from both ends — shrinking who is advised to get them and kneecapping the science behind next-generation vaccines. In August 2025, Kennedy [cancelled](#) nearly \$500 million out of 22 mRNA vaccine projects, axing government support for candidates fighting COVID-19, the seasonal flu, and H5N1. Kennedy claimed that mRNA vaccine technology "does not perform adequately" for respiratory viruses, despite regulators and large studies showing the opposite and former BARDA chief Rick Bright [calling](#) the move a "strategic misstep" that weakens America's frontline defense against fast-moving pathogens. In January, Moderna's CEO [announced](#) that the company will stop backing Phase III trials for new infectious disease vaccines because RFK Jr. has made the U.S. too hostile a market, a move that means at least 11 late-stage vaccine programs could be pushed aside. NIH also [cancelled](#) dozens of grants focused on vaccine hesitancy and acceptance because the research no longer aligned with the agency's priorities.

Vaccine Access In Disarray. RFK Jr. has undercut all of the federal tools that made vaccination easy to navigate. In mid-2025, his team [stripped](#) vaccines.gov of plain-language statements like "vaccines can help you stay healthy," and gutted its FAQ and educational content. Most critically, he effectively switched off vaccines.gov's zipcode search tool, returning no locations even when users entered valid ZIP codes. Former CDC officials said the site was moved out of the immunization program and placed directly under political leadership, and they



believe it went dark because leaders ordered it down, not because of a technical glitch. Other federal and state agencies still direct people to vaccines.gov to find shots, leaving families more confused than ever with mixed recommendations, missing information, and a broken search tool. RFK Jr.'s CDC also [rewrote](#) its autism page to remove the clear line that “vaccines do not cause autism” and to label that statement “not evidence-based,” aligning official language with Kennedy’s long-debunked beliefs and further confusing families about what the science actually shows.

- **COVID-19 Vaccine Confusion.** Kennedy has also turned what used to be straightforward COVID-19 vaccine guidance into a maze. By late summer 2025, the CDC had [shifted](#) from recommending vaccination for virtually all eligible adults and children to emphasizing shots mainly for older adults and people with specific medical risks, leaving many healthy kids, teens, and working-age adults outside the core recommendation. FactCheck.org [found](#) that, despite HHS claims that “anyone who wants a vaccine can get one,” Kennedy’s policy choices and messaging have, in practice, made COVID-19 vaccines harder to obtain and more confusing to navigate. Parents and clinicians [struggle](#) to answer basic questions from healthy, lower-risk patients about whether they should still get vaccinated and whether COVID-19 vaccines will be covered by their insurance. To further increase doubt and mistrust, the FDA now [intends](#) to put the most severe “black box” warning on COVID-19 vaccines without any basis in science, according to reporting in December.

Mainstreaming Conspiracy Theorists and Anti-Vaccine Quacks. Breaking yet another promise that he made at confirmation, Kennedy [fired](#) all 17 members of the panel that advises the CDC on vaccines in June, known as ACIP. After firing ACIP, he refilled it with appointees who see themselves as vaccine critics, not vaccine champions, and gave them a [new mission](#) in which “efficacy will be secondary” to scrutinizing alleged vaccine harms. Several of RFK Jr.’s handpicked committee members are openly anti-vaccine. Newly appointed ACIP chair Dr. Kirk Milhoan has [questioned](#) the need for the polio vaccine and suggested that allowing measles to rampage unchecked by vaccines will be a useful natural experiment to determine the real incidence of hospitalization and death among those infected. Another one of Kennedy’s appointees, Dr. Kimberly Biss, proudly [described](#) herself as anti-vaccine and said that her “grandchildren will not get any shots if I can help it.” Beyond the vaccine panel, RFK Jr. has [stuffed](#) his new autism advisory panel with anti-vaccine leaders and promoters of quack “cures” for autism, and his [hand-picked](#) top vaccine regulator at the FDA circulated a memo making completely unsupported [claims](#) about child deaths tied to the COVID-19 vaccine. At the same time he has stacked his administration and advisory panels with anti-vaxxers, Kennedy is [pushing](#) to add even more anti-vaccine activists to ACIP this year and open the Vaccine Injury Compensation Program to autism claims, despite the lack of scientific evidence, prompting bipartisan warnings that the fund could be swamped with baseless petitions and that manufacturers might walk away from the pediatric market altogether.

Slashing the Childhood Vaccine Schedule. Kennedy’s biggest anti-vaccine move has been to rewrite the childhood vaccine schedule in ways that sound like “choice” but instead [sow chaos](#) and put [families at risk](#). Breaking yet another one of his commitments to Senator Cassidy, in December 2025, Kennedy’s revamped ACIP voted to [end](#) the universal hepatitis B birth dose, telling clinicians to reserve it for babies of hepatitis B-positive mothers and delay everyone else’s first shot to at least two months, even though the birth dose is how the U.S. catches missed maternal infection and has [reduced](#) the annual infection rate in infants by 99 percent. Barely a



month later, HHS and the CDC rolled out “major updates” that cut the number of diseases with universally recommended vaccines from 17 to 11 at the [directive](#) of Trump and RFK Jr. Hepatitis A, hepatitis B, rotavirus, influenza, COVID-19, RSV and quadrivalent meningococcal vaccines were shoved into “high-risk” or “shared decision-making” categories, even though the safety and effectiveness data [did not change](#). The administration sold this as reducing “coercion,” but pediatricians have warned it will mean fewer kids getting these shots and a higher risk of illness and death from preventable conditions.

MAHA’s War On Vaccines In The States. Kennedy’s anti-vaccine agenda is now a statehouse project as well. An AP [review](#) found more than 420 anti-science bills — many promoted by groups tied to RFK Jr. — were introduced in state legislatures in 2025 alone, attacking bedrock public health protections like vaccines, fluoride, and milk safety, with about 30 becoming law in a dozen states. In Florida, Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo and Gov. Ron DeSantis announced [plans](#) to end all state vaccine mandates, including school shots, [framing](#) basic immunization rules as “immoral.” Idaho [passed](#) a first-in-the-nation “Medical Freedom” law banning vaccine mandates and other medical-intervention mandates in schools and businesses. And Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton has announced an [investigation](#) into pediatricians who vaccinate because, he claims, they receive illegal financial incentives to do so. Kennedy-aligned groups are already using the newly announced federal vaccine schedule to [press legislatures](#) nationwide to weaken school and daycare requirements and drive down pediatric vaccination further.



HHS Under RFK: Chaos By Design

HHS Firings: Fire, Rehire, Repeat. Within 24 hours of RFK Jr. being sworn in as HHS Secretary, the Trump administration [targeted](#) roughly 5,000 federal health workers for layoffs, including dozens at NIH's Vaccine Research Center, sending an immediate signal that core scientific programs were in the crosshairs. In March, Kennedy [announced](#) that HHS would restructure and cut 10,000 more full-time employees across health agencies. This came on top of 10,000 employees who left voluntarily, shrinking the workforce from about 82,000 full-time employees to 62,000. But this wasn't enough — during the October government shutdown, the administration [moved](#) to permanently terminate another 1,100 to 1,200 HHS staffers, more than any other department except Treasury. Within days, HHS began quietly [reinstating](#) hundreds of workers whose layoff notices were sent “in error,” while others remained fired with little explanation. As of December, NIH was [racing to fill](#) almost half of its most important roles, with 13 vacant directorships out of 27 institutes and centers. Public health [leaders warn](#) that the combination of mass layoffs and ad-hoc reinstatements at HHS is reckless and will make it harder to protect Americans by disrupting outbreak surveillance, program continuity, and essential services.

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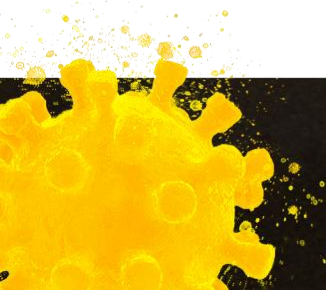
“Living Hell” Inside the CDC. Working under RFK Jr. at the CDC has become “a living hell,” with career scientists [describing](#) gaslighting, surveillance, and waves of layoffs. After becoming the first-ever Senate-confirmed director of the CDC, Susan Monarez lasted barely a month before being [fired](#) for refusing to back vaccine recommendations that cast doubt on immunization efficacy. Her ousting triggered at least four additional rapid [resignations](#) among senior CDC officials. After a deadly [shooting](#) in August at CDC headquarters by an anti-vaccine gunman, staff expected leadership to rally around security and science; instead, they faced [accusations](#) and a “tepid” [response](#) from RFK Jr. and his appointees and strict [new rules](#) forcing even routine contacts with states or the public to go through political minders. Hundreds of employees at CDC have been [abruptly terminated](#) or put on administrative leave, wiping out entire offices and shrinking the agency’s ability to track outbreaks like measles just as cases surged, while staff describe feeling trapped in a “Twilight Zone” as public-health risks mount and their ability to respond erodes.

Outside experts describe the FDA as in “soap opera”-level disarray.

The FDA: Grifters and Anti-Vaxxers Meet Drug and Vaccine Regulation. At the FDA, key centers have been [thrown into turmoil](#) by Trump and RFK Jr.’s personnel choices. Outside experts [describe](#) the agency as in “soap opera”-level disarray, and former leaders warn that this churn is shredding the FDA’s credibility just as its decisions on COVID-19 shots, flu vaccines, and new drugs are under intense public scrutiny. In the drug division, Commissioner Marty Makary’s hand-picked chief, George Tidmarsh, was abruptly placed on leave and then [forced out](#) in November amid accusations he misused his authority in a feud tied to a former business partner and clashed with colleagues over a new fast-track review program that opened the door to political meddling in drug approvals. In the biologics center that oversees vaccines and blood products, Director Vinay Prasad has [created](#) a climate of fear, pushing out at least seven senior leaders and presiding over the loss of hundreds of employees through retirements, layoffs, and resignations. Scientists now think twice before raising safety or policy concerns out of fear that Prasad will block transfers or target their jobs, a chilling effect they say is already weakening oversight of vaccines and other biologics. Prasad’s own vaccine policy moves have deepened concerns. In an [internal memo](#) emailed to the entire Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research in November, Prasad asserted that FDA’s review of 96 child deaths reported to VAERS showed that “no fewer than 10” were related to COVID-19 vaccination and called this “the first time the US FDA will acknowledge that COVID-19 vaccines have killed American children,” an extraordinary claim without any data or case histories to back it up that shocked former regulators and vaccine experts.



Stacking the Deck With Conspiracy Theorists. RFK Jr. has loaded up HHS, the CDC, and the country's health advisory panels with anti-vaxxers and conspiracy theorists. The principal deputy director at the CDC, Ralph Abraham, [halted](#) all vaccination campaigns while he was serving as Louisiana Surgeon General, and acting director Jim O'Neill is a [conspiracy theorist](#) with no medical training. The new chair of the President's Cancer Panel, Yale epidemiologist Harvey Risch, has [speculated](#) about "turbo cancer" supposedly caused by COVID-19 vaccines and promoted ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine as cancer or COVID-19 treatments. RFK Jr.'s hand-picked autism panel is [loaded](#) with anti-vaccine conspiracy theorists and so is his newly reshuffled [vaccine advisory committee](#).



Gutting Science and Innovation

Grants Cancelled, Budgets Slashed, Science Shattered. A *New York Times* [analysis](#) of NIH awards found that in just the first six months of Trump and RFK Jr.'s tenure, the agency terminated 1,389 medical research grants and delayed funding for more than 1,000 additional projects, disbursing about \$1.6 billion less than the prior year over a comparable period. In the end, roughly over 2,000 NIH grants were [cancelled or frozen](#) in 2025, touching every area of science and medicine, with only about half later reinstated, often after legal or political pressure. At the National Science Foundation, more than 400 active awards were [terminated](#) and over 1,600 grants in total were cut, leaving overall science funding at its lowest level in decades and hitting health-adjacent areas like climate and environmental health especially hard. The results have been [devastating](#), disrupting labs, upending lives, delaying discoveries of new treatments, and gutting the pipeline of young scientists that have made U.S. science preeminent for more than 50 years. The White House even [proposed](#) hundreds of millions of dollars *more* in research cuts for NIH in 2026, but that proved a bridge too far even for Republicans in Congress.

Clinical Trials Halted, Lives On the Line. Trump and RFK Jr.'s damage goes well beyond the lab, reaching into hospitals and clinics across the country. Dozens of NIH-funded clinical trials — 383 out of 11,008 total — were [interrupted](#) by funding cuts in 2025. Those disrupted trials span cancer, infectious diseases, cardiovascular disease, mental health, and reproductive health, and together involve at least 74,311 patients already enrolled in “active, not recruiting” studies who signed up on the expectation that their care and follow-up would be completed. Researchers warn that shutting off support mid-stream wastes years of prior investment and risks discouraging patients from volunteering for future studies. Former NIH Director Francis Collins has [warned](#) that abruptly cancelling multi-year Alzheimer's or cancer trials puts “people's lives at risk” and [called](#) the research cuts “careless” and “heartless.” Beyond the risk to people's lives, cancelling clinical trials is a devastating loss to local economies since each dollar NIH awarded in 2024 was estimated to return \$2.46 to the economy within a year — a 146 percent return on investment.

Purging “Equity” From Science. RFK Jr. has been particularly ruthless in targeting research or health programs that address health disparities. An NIH analysis by former institute director Jeremy Berg [found](#) more than 700 multiyear grants were forced to change titles from 2024 to 2025, with nearly 100 removing the word “equity,” dozens deleting “disparities,” and many stripping out references to specific racial groups and gender minorities. HHS leadership froze or “reconsidered” scores of diversity and equity-related grants, and agency leadership has [signaled](#) that even those restored under court order are unlikely to be renewed. Head Start centers were told to [avoid](#) words like “disability,” “woman,” and “tribal” or risk losing HHS funding, and NIH was forced to [backtrack](#) from plans to eliminate the Women's Health Initiative, a landmark study of women's health. Senior NIH leaders who [resigned](#) in protest said this combination of cuts and censorship has made topics like health inequities, structural racism, and gender-affirming care dangerous to study, costing the agency its scientific integrity.

Destroying Our External Public Health Capacity and Putting Us All At Risk. RFK Jr. and Trump have [subjected](#) states to the abrupt cancellation, and then partial restoration, of major public health grants with almost no warning. Health departments nationwide, our frontline for response to emerging public health threats, are [facing](#) massive layoffs, funding cuts, and hiring freezes because of the erratic behavior of the federal government. But RFK Jr. and Trump have not only weakened U.S. science at home; in one year, the administration has



systematically torn down the external public health capacity that the United States once funded and led. Trump and Elon Musk’s dismantling of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has already resulted in the [deaths](#) of hundreds of thousands of people and left our country more vulnerable to both extant infectious diseases and the potential spread of drug-resistant diseases in the U.S. In January 2026, Trump and RFK Jr. completed the United States’ withdrawal from the World Health Organization, a decision that has been [described](#) as “scientifically reckless” and likely to leave the U.S. and the world more vulnerable to threats like avian influenza and Ebola that no single country can manage alone.



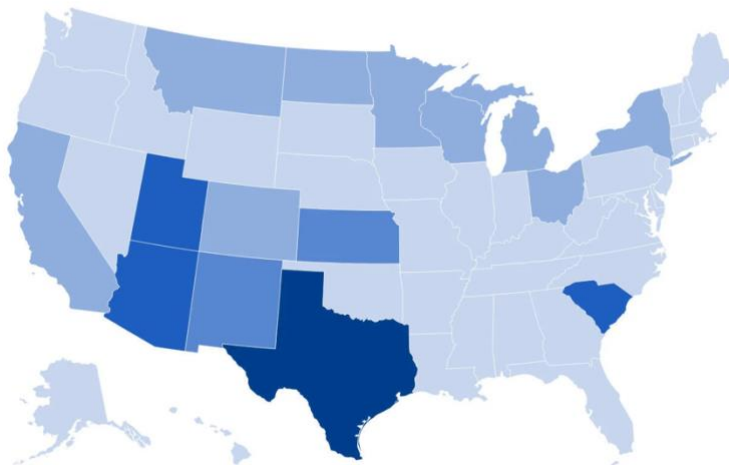
Public Health Threats: Inept Response and Surging Infections

Measles Elimination On the Brink. A [shocking resurgence](#) of measles in America is the clearest measure of what Trump and RFK Jr.'s war on vaccines has done. There were more than 2,200 confirmed [measles cases](#) in the United States in 2025 — the most in over 30 years. There were at least three measles deaths in the U.S. last year and 11 percent of those infected required hospitalization for treatment. Around 93 percent of cases were in people who were unvaccinated or whose vaccination status was unknown. Because of these unchecked outbreaks, the U.S. is now [likely](#) to lose its status as a country that has fully eliminated measles. RFK's hand-picked CDC principal deputy director Ralph Abraham has [brushed off](#) the prospect of losing elimination status as the “cost of doing business” and used a *Wall Street Journal* [letter](#) to argue that “measles is not an American policy failure,” a stance that infectious-disease experts say grossly understates the role of falling vaccination rates and federal inaction in making these outbreaks possible.

Reported measles cases in 2025

A total of **2,242** cases were reported across the U.S. in 2025. Click or hover over a state to see more information.

of cases



Data as of January 16, 2026.

Map: Taylor Johnston / CBS News • Source: CDC

©CBS NEWS DATA

Measles In Texas: Two Child Deaths and RFK Jr.'s Quack Cures. RFK Jr.'s tenure as HHS Secretary began with a serious outbreak of measles centered in West Texas. By the time the outbreak was over, more than 750 cases had been [reported](#), dozens of people were hospitalized, and two unvaccinated school-aged children had died. Initial response to the outbreak was [hampered](#) by Kennedy's chaotic layoffs and funding cuts at the CDC. In February, after the [first death](#) from the measles in the U.S. in a decade was reported, RFK Jr. continued to [downplay](#) the seriousness of the situation, calling such outbreaks “not unusual.” As cases continued to soar and local officials pleaded with residents to vaccinate their children, Kennedy gave only a [cursory and grudging](#) endorsement of the vaccine while continuing to question its safety.



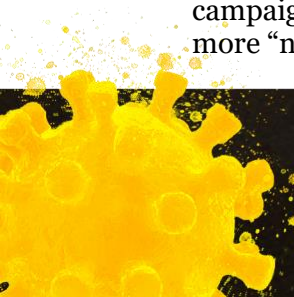
Instead, he [touted](#) vitamin A and cod liver oil as “dramatically” reducing measles mortality and publicly praised two Texas doctors promoting these bogus treatments — including one doctor who was later [filmed](#) seeing patients while covered in an infectious measles rash. RFK Jr.’s quack cures did nothing to end the outbreak, but did result in cases of vitamin A [toxicity](#) in some families who followed his advice instead of vaccinating.

Massive Measles Outbreak In South Carolina, Crickets From HHS. An ongoing outbreak of measles centered in South Carolina has surged to [over 875 cases](#) and is still growing, making it the [largest](#) outbreak in the United States since measles was declared eliminated decades ago. Nearly all cases are among the unvaccinated, and infected people have [exposed](#) others to the virus in a labor and delivery unit at a hospital, where babies are at a high risk of infection, and in the workplaces of major South Carolina employers, including BMW and Michelin plants. At least 19 patients have been [hospitalized](#) in South Carolina, including children with rare but serious encephalitis brought on by the measles. RFK Jr. has not [publicly mentioned](#) the outbreak or encouraged vaccination and his CDC principal deputy director has dismissed concerns about declining vaccination rates and the pending loss of measles elimination status.



Other Preventable Infectious Disease Threats. Measles is not the only vaccine-preventable disease making a deadly comeback. At least 13 children died of [whooping cough](#) in 2025, with tens of thousands more infected, as pediatricians warn that falling immunization is driving the spike and plead with pregnant people and parents to get booster doses that can protect newborns. “Flu-like” illness hit its [highest recorded level](#) in January 2026 with hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations and over 5,000 deaths, including at least nine pediatric deaths. Despite this rampant and deadly flu activity, Kennedy’s vaccine panel moved to eliminate the recommendation that everyone over 6 months old get an annual flu vaccine, with RFK Jr. [telling](#) CBS News that it would be a “better thing” if fewer children receive the flu vaccine and publicly bragging about how he stopped getting flu shots years ago.

Playing With Fire On Foodborne Illness. The administration is also playing with fire on emerging and food-borne threats. Avian influenza strains have continued to spread in U.S. poultry and dairy herds, with at least one human [death](#) reported in Washington state and repeated detections in farmworkers. Chaos at HHS has [hindered](#) the joint response to avian flu with the USDA. RFK Jr. has even [suggested](#) that he favors letting the virus rip through poultry flocks unchecked rather than vaccinating birds. Kennedy spent years boosting raw milk on the campaign trail and in conservative media, telling audiences that unpasteurized dairy is safer and more “natural” than the pasteurized milk regulators recommend, even as the FDA and the CDC



warned that raw milk can carry H5N1 and other pathogens that cause kidney failure, miscarriages, and death. At the FDA, foreign food safety inspections have fallen to [historic lows](#) because of staffing cuts, leaving more of the global supply chain effectively on the honor system at the same time that listeria outbreaks tied to precooked meals and ready-to-eat foods have [sickened and killed](#) Americans. Entomologists now [warn](#) that screwworm, a parasitic fly that can devastate livestock and wildlife and occasionally infect humans, is once again edging northward with climate shifts and reduced surveillance capacity, greatly increasing the odds that the U.S. will face a costly and challenging eradication fight under Kennedy's leadership.



Make America Unhealthy Again: Conspiracy Theories And Bogus Cures

Trump and Kennedy Scream Misinformation About Tylenol At Women. Trump and RFK Jr. have taken a speculative hypothesis linking Tylenol use to autism and turned it into an official crusade directed at pregnant women. At a White House event in September 2025, Trump and Kennedy [announced](#) that FDA would revise acetaminophen labels to warn that Tylenol use in pregnancy “may be linked to a significantly heightened risk of autism,” and told expectant mothers to avoid the drug unless they “absolutely” could not “tough it out,” despite FDA’s own [statement](#) that some studies show an association but “a causal relationship has not been established.” Kennedy used the same briefing to wrap the Tylenol claim into his broader autism initiative, tying rising diagnoses to acetaminophen, folate “deficiencies,” and a proposed off-label autism treatment with leucovorin, even as the Autism Science Foundation [called](#) the announcement “dangerous” and accused the administration of blaming mothers without evidence. Trump has [repeatedly](#) doubled down, [screaming](#) at women in [all caps](#) on Truth Social that “PREGNANT WOMEN SHOULD NOT BE TAKING TYLENOL!!!” and that women [should](#) “flight like hell” not to take Tylenol and “DON’T GIVE TYLENOL TO YOUR YOUNG CHILD FOR VIRTUALLY ANY REASON.” Even after Kennedy [conceded](#) there is “not sufficient evidence” to say Tylenol “definitely causes autism,” he continued urging pregnant women and parents of young children to “restrict” use to situations where it is “truly necessary,” while MAHA ally Texas AG Ken Paxton [rushed](#) to file a lawsuit against Johnson & Johnson and Kenvue built around the administration’s rhetoric, prompting drug-safety experts to warn that the real effect of this campaign is to [scare](#) pregnant patients and their doctors off the safest available option and push them toward other medications that actually do carry proven fetal risks. In January 2026, a group of researchers publishing in the *Lancet* [released](#) the most comprehensive analysis to date of the existing science and found no link between acetaminophen taken during pregnancy and autism, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or intellectual disability.

Making Tooth Decay Great Again. RFK Jr. has spent his first year in office trying to turn his long-running fringe crusade against fluoride into national policy, [repeatedly calling](#) fluoride “industrial waste,” and a “hazardous neurotoxin” that “makes people stupid” and blaming its addition to drinking water, without definitive evidence, on lower IQ scores, thyroid problems, and other chronic conditions. In April 2025, he [announced](#) that he would direct the CDC to stop recommending community water fluoridation and work with EPA to tighten or end federal fluoride limits, even as CDC, NIH, and independent reviews continued to find that optimally fluoridated water safely reduces tooth decay and that U.S. levels are far below those in the small, high-dose studies he cites. Consequently, Utah and Florida became the first two states to [enact statewide bans](#) on fluoride in drinking water. The FDA has also moved beyond the water faucet to [phase out](#) fluoride drops and tablets used by families in communities without fluoridated water. Kennedy’s MAHA allies are [racing](#) to impose more state and local fluoride bans despite a massive [new study](#) out in November 2025 that reaffirmed decades of high-quality research. [Dentists](#) and [pediatricians](#) warn that removing fluoride from water and pulling supplements off the market will “deteriorate oral health” and “cost billions” in additional dental and medical care, with the heaviest burden falling on Medicaid-enrolled kids and seniors who cannot afford regular treatment.

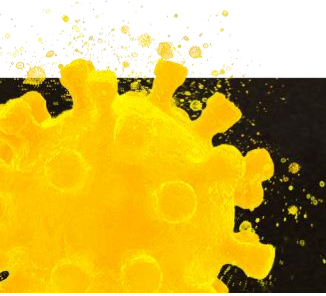


RFK's Obsession With 5G and "Electromagnetic Radiation" Goes From Facebook Fodder to Federal Policy. RFK Jr. has long been obsessed with the supposed dangers of 5G networks. According to Kennedy, [5G](#) "causes cancer. It causes DNA dysfunction. It penetrates the blood-brain barrier. It's making our children stupider and sicker." Kennedy also [claims](#) that 5G networks are part of a sinister plot "to harvest our data and control our behavior." As HHS Secretary, Kennedy's conspiracy theories are now federal policy. In January 2026, Kennedy [told USA Today](#) that 5G towers and cellphone radiation are "a major health concern" and claimed there are "more than 10,000 studies" showing that electromagnetic fields cause cancer, tumor growth and DNA damage, even though WHO, FDA and other mainstream bodies have repeatedly found [no proven link](#) between everyday cellphone use and brain cancer in humans. Under RFK Jr.'s watch, the FDA has now quietly [scrubbed](#) webpages that had, for years, told the public there was "no evidence" cellphones cause health problems, with HHS officials admitting the pages were removed as the department launches a new study of cellphone radiation "directed by President Trump's MAHA Commission" to look for supposed gaps in knowledge.

Care For Women and LGBTQ+ People In the Crosshairs. MAHA's culture war has put women's and reproductive health in the crosshairs, using the machinery of HHS to reward ideologically aligned care and punish everything else. HHS has formally [rescinded](#) Biden-era guidance that had required federally funded pharmacies to dispense methotrexate and misoprostol when prescribed for autoimmune disease, ectopic pregnancy, or miscarriage care — opening the door for pharmacies to refuse lifesaving drugs because they are also used in abortion care. Despite his [long record](#) of supporting abortion rights and contraceptives, RFK Jr. has made a complete u-turn as HHS Secretary, ordering the FDA to launch a [new review](#) of medication abortion based on junk science from anti-abortion groups, [endorsing](#) wastewater surveillance aimed at tracking and restricting abortion pill use, and [decimating](#) the family planning office at HHS and effectively ending an initiative to provide contraception to millions of low-income women. Under Kennedy, HHS has also worked to choke off care for LGBTQ+ Americans, releasing a report claiming "medical dangers" from pediatric gender-affirming care, and [working to block](#) hospitals and doctors providing such care to minors from participating in Medicare and Medicaid. Kennedy has also targeted the LGBTQ+ community by [cancelling](#) more than 200 grants funding HIV research and [ending](#) the specialized suicide prevention service for LGBTQ+ youth.

Nutrition Guidelines In the Pocket of Big Beef and Dairy. After nearly a year of hyping his MAHA nutritional goals, RFK Jr.'s final result was a food pyramid that [looks like](#) it was drawn up in a cattlemen's boardroom. The new 2025–2030 dietary guidelines brag about "ending the war on saturated fats," put red meat, cheese, and full-fat dairy at the top of the pyramid, and even name [beef tallow](#) — one of Kennedy's personal favorites — as a recommended cooking fat alongside olive oil, while using vaguer language on added sugars, alcohol, and ultra-processed foods. RFK Jr.'s panel that overturned the scientific advisory committee's more plant-forward draft included multiple members with [financial ties](#) to the beef and dairy industries, and many of that committee's recommendations were quietly [discarded](#) in the final MAHA guidelines. Nutrition [experts warn](#) that elevating red meat and high-fat animal products this aggressively contradicts decades of evidence on heart disease and will be [hardest](#) on low-income communities in an era of [soaring](#) beef prices, while school nutrition directors say the red-meat- and full-fat-heavy menus Kennedy is pushing are financially [unrealistic](#) for already strained school meal programs.





PUBLIC HEALTH WATCH

Institutions, States, And The Public Are Pushing Back On RFK Jr.'s Dangerous Agenda

Institutions and Officials Speak Out. Six former Surgeons General from both Republican and Democratic administrations have [issued](#) an unprecedented joint public warning that RFK Jr.'s actions as HHS Secretary are “endangering the health of the nation,” writing that they “are compelled to speak with one voice” because his policies constitute a “profound, immediate and unprecedented threat” to public health. Prominent Republican health officials have also broken ranks to criticize Kennedy’s agenda. Scott Gottlieb, Trump’s first FDA Commissioner, has publicly [warned](#) that RFK Jr.’s proposed “alternatives” to the MMR vaccine are “not viable” and has [criticized](#) HHS’s measles response and Kennedy’s dismantling of internal HHS structures. Former Trump Surgeon General Jerome Adams has likewise [condemned](#) Kennedy’s record, warning that RFK Jr.’s vaccine policies “are going to make us sicker, not safer,” and criticizing his mRNA funding cuts as a decision that “is likely to result in loss of lives.” Major medical organizations have responded by fighting Kennedy’s agenda in court and in clinical guidance. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and other pediatric groups [sued](#) the Trump administration after HHS abruptly canceled nearly \$12 million in grants, with federal judges finding substantial evidence that the cuts were retaliatory punishment for AAP’s vocal criticism of Kennedy’s vaccine policies and advocacy for childhood immunization and gender-affirming care.

Blue State Health Alliances. Democratic governors in blue states have [moved](#) aggressively to blunt RFK Jr.’s efforts to weaken federal vaccination and surveillance infrastructure, [announcing](#) a multistate public-health compact that pools disease-surveillance data, harmonizes guidance, and explores bulk vaccine purchasing as a hedge against further federal retrenchment. Democratic governors have taken a [number of steps](#), including carving state funds to maintain access to recommended shots, directing insurers to keep covering vaccines endorsed by expert panels, and [recruiting former](#) CDC scientists who resigned or were pushed out under Kennedy to rebuild capacity inside state and local health departments.



MAHA Isn't Popular.

50 percent of registered voters DISAPPROVE of RFK Jr.

MAHA Isn't Popular. After a year of RFK Jr. running HHS, the data is clear: the MAHA agenda is politically toxic outside of its core base. Polling shows Kennedy and Trump have [cratered](#) public confidence in federal health leadership, with Americans who say the U.S. is less healthy under the leadership of Trump and RFK now outnumbering believers 2-to-1. Kennedy himself is uniquely unpopular — YouGov finds he has the [lowest](#) net approval rating of any cabinet official, and according to a January Quinnipiac University [poll](#), 50 percent of registered voters disapprove of RFK Jr. KFF polls [found](#) nearly six in ten Americans disapprove of how Kennedy is handling vaccines and federal health agencies and more than half of adults who have heard about Kennedy's changes to the childhood vaccine schedule [think](#) they will make children's health in this country worse. And while MAHA rhetoric centers on vaccine skepticism, the public simply does not agree. Large majorities continue to [support](#) routine childhood vaccination and vaccine research and a recent Fox News poll [shows](#) that voters now trust Democrats more than Republicans on vaccines and public health heading into 2026.

Looking Ahead: RFK Jr. and the Midterm Elections. Despite his unpopularity, RFK Jr. is seeking to become a [central player](#) in the 2026 midterms, using his MAHA agenda and alliance with Trump to shape Senate and House contests while emerging as a [prized surrogate](#) for Republican candidates looking to campaign on food, vaccine, and wellness fights. Pro-vaccine Republicans like Sen. Bill Cassidy now face MAHA-aligned primary challengers and [sustained attacks](#) from Kennedy's followers. Kennedy has [stepped up](#) his travel ahead of November, headlining "Take Back Your Health" rallies in swing states like Pennsylvania that double as MAHA organizing hubs, where he appears with Republican legislators pushing his agenda. Within the GOP, RFK Jr. now [functions](#) as a MAHA guru of sorts, but his own [revived](#) We The People Party is building ballot access as a longer-term MAHA or RFK Jr. presidential vehicle, and the MAHA Institute [operates](#) as his independent movement infrastructure. At the same time, Kennedy's disastrous tenure at HHS has [spurred](#) a [wave](#) of Democratic physician and STEM candidates, with groups like 314 Action and other pro-science networks recruiting doctors, researchers, and public-health professionals who explicitly cite his vaccine rollbacks and attacks on public health as their motivation to run.

