



Written by [John Stossel](#) on March 20, 2024

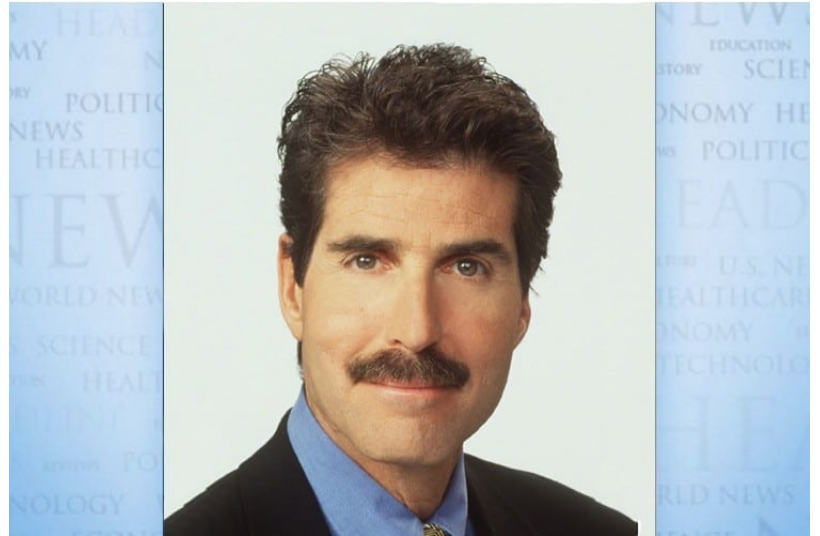
'15 Days to Slow the Spread'

Four years ago, government officials told us, "Stay home!" We have "15 days to slow the spread."

Days turned into months and then years, while officials chipped away at our freedoms.

I have long been wary of politicians, but even I was surprised at how authoritarian many were eager to be.

Some demanded police to go after people surfing. They took down the rims of basketball hoops. Children's playgrounds were taped up like crime scenes. They told people in rural Utah and Wyoming to stay in their homes.



John Stossel

In the name of safety, politicians did many things that diminished our lives, without making us safer. They complied with teachers unions' demand to keep schools closed. Kids' learning has been set back by years.

Politicians destroyed jobs by closing businesses. Some shutdown orders were ridiculous. Landscaping businesses and private campgrounds were forced to shut down.

Both Donald Trump and Joe Biden sharply increased government spending. Trump's \$2.2 trillion "stimulus" package, followed by Biden's \$1.9 trillion "American Rescue Plan," led to so much money-printing that inflation doubled and then tripled.

This week, the fourth-year anniversary of "15 days to stop the spread," my new video looks back at politicians' incompetence.

First, government probably killed people with its endless red tape.

At least the Trump administration broke FDA rules to speed vaccine approvals. But FDA rules kept perfectly good American Covid test kits off the market because they hadn't gone through its multiyear approval process.

Michigan's Gov. Gretchen Whitmer banned "public and private gatherings of any size." Residents were told they could not see friends or relatives.

Many of her rules seemed random. She banned motorboats and jet skis, but allowed kayaks and canoes. She closed small businesses, but exempted big-box stores if they blocked off aisles offering plant nurseries and paint. Why?

Even the CDC's "six-foot rule" under Trump was arbitrary, says former FDA commissioner, Dr. Scott Gottlieb. Covid travels in aerosols that flow much farther than six feet.

When some Americans became fed up and protested, they were vilified for "threatening the public." Some were fined. A few were arrested.



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It's clear now that restrictive rules were not the best way to protect people.

Sweden took a near opposite approach. They mostly left people alone.

Swedish officials encouraged the elderly and other at-risk people to stay home.

But beyond that, they let life carry on as normal. Sweden didn't impose lockdowns, school closures or mask mandates.

They followed standard pre-Covid wisdom that the best protection is what epidemiologists call "herd" or "collective" immunity. Once a critical mass of people are infected and recover, collective immunity will reduce the total number of infections.

Arrogant American politicians and media "experts" sneered at Sweden's approach.

NBC "reported" on what it called, "Sweden's failed experiment. How their dangerous Covid gamble went wrong."

CBS confidently stated, "Sweden becomes an example of how not to handle COVID."

Time Magazine headlined: "Swedish COVID-19 Response Is a Disaster."

But the media's experts were just wrong. Swedish health officials were right.

Yes, at the beginning of the pandemic, Sweden suffered high numbers of Covid deaths, but as predicted, over time, herd immunity protected people. Sweden's excess death rate was the *lowest* in Europe.

Sweden's economy got through the pandemic much healthier than other countries. Because Swedish schools never closed, Swedish students didn't suffer the learning losses that American kids did.

Four years later, have media blowhards who were wrong apologized? Corrected their stories? No.

Have American politicians apologized and begged forgiveness for their arrogance, for destroying jobs, restricting our freedom and needlessly pushing us around? No.

Let's not give politicians power like that again.

Every Tuesday at JohnStossel.com, Stossel posts a new video about the battle between government and freedom.

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