



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on August 19, 2021

America: Free Country or Banana Republic?

Think you live in a free country?

Think again.

In a free country, individual liberties are not subject to the whims of rulers. As long as a person does not infringe on others' liberties, his own liberties may not be infringed. They do not depend on the good graces of those who happen to be in power at any given moment.

Unfortunately, the last 18 months have demonstrated beyond doubt that Americans no longer live in a free country. Longstanding liberties enshrined in both the federal and state constitutions were eviscerated under the guise of containing a virus with a survival rate comparable to that of the seasonal flu. Innocent, perfectly healthy people were subjected to indefinite house arrest. Businesses deemed "nonessential" by politicians and bureaucrats were forcibly shuttered for months on end; others were only allowed to operate under severe restrictions. When they were allowed to go out in public, individuals were forced to don [useless](#) (perhaps [worse-than-useless](#)) face coverings and stand yards away from others. Churches were forbidden to hold services. Large public gatherings, even outdoors, were prohibited.



Yet these restrictions were not applied equally across the board. While protests against the tyrannical orders were met with recriminations and arrests, often-violent demonstrations against alleged police racism were allowed to proceed unhindered. In fact, some of the same politicians who railed against other public gatherings [turned up](#) at said protests. Many of them [violated their own edicts](#) in other ways. Liberty thus became dependent on one's position or political perspective.

A couple months ago, claiming the vaccines had turned the tide against COVID-19, these same rulers loosened or even rescinded their overbearing dictates, but always with the implied threat of reimposing them if the virus began running rampant again.

Now, citing increases in cases ([but not deaths, which remain low](#)), they are making good on their threats — and then some. In some jurisdictions, [mask mandates](#) and [public-gathering restrictions](#) are back, and major cities are now [banning unvaccinated people](#) from restaurants, gyms, and other public



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places.

Practically all of these on-again, off-again restrictions have been imposed by governors, mayors, and assorted other potentates. Few were passed by legislatures. This is not to say that similarly restrictive laws would have been any better than the orders we got, but it is to say that our liberties have been and remain at the mercy of virtual dictators, the very antithesis of a free society.

Not all these would-be Stalins have been equally destructive, of course. Generally speaking, the worst offenders were Democrats, who have a natural affinity for wielding absolute power “for our own good.” Plenty of Republicans, however, also heeded the ever-changing advice of Dr. Anthony Fauci and his fellow bureaucrats at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Two GOP governors, on the other hand, bucked the trend and became heroes as a result: South Dakota’s Kristi Noem and Florida’s Ron DeSantis. Still, neither has an unblemished record. Both imposed some restrictions initially — Noem [would have gone much further](#) if the legislature hadn’t balked — only to quickly realize the error of their ways and reverse course. Both, but particularly DeSantis, have been outspoken in their opposition to any further restrictions. South Dakotans and Floridians can be grateful for these executives.

Nevertheless, there is still cause for concern.

Neither DeSantis nor Noem, to this author’s knowledge, has repudiated the notion that he or she has the authority to impose such restrictions. They have simply argued, quite correctly, that the restrictions are a bad idea. Were they to change their minds, they could easily begin mandating masks or vaccinations. Their successors may well do so.

Furthermore, DeSantis, at least, has run roughshod over local governments. Among other things, he ordered school districts to [reopen](#) and [not to require students to wear masks](#), [voided all local COVID-19 restrictions, and prohibited local governments and businesses from requiring proof of vaccination before rendering services](#). While DeSantis’ orders are, for the most part, decidedly in favor of individual liberty, they also represent another way in which freedom is at the mercy of the official with the greatest power.

America is at a crossroads. Will the people demand that their leaders stop treating their God-given liberties as something to be granted or rescinded at will? Or are we doomed to a future in which we can only hope to be governed by the strongman (or woman) with the least interest in enslaving us? The former is the way of freedom and prosperity. The latter is the way to a banana republic.



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