



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on April 3, 2020

In States With no Stay-at-home Orders, Citizens Staying Safe

There are currently 38 states operating under “stay-at-home” rules, “shelter-in-place” orders, or full “lockdown” mandates that forbid citizens from leaving their homes without explicit permission from authorities. Of the remaining 12, seven — Wyoming, Utah, Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Alabama and South Carolina — have at least one city or municipality under one of these restrictions. That leaves five — Iowa, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, and Arkansas — that don’t have any such statewide mandates.



USA Today technology writer Marco della Cava was tasked to learn [how those five “free” states are managing](#) without coronavirus mandates. He asked, “So, what’s life like.... Are some Americans [in those states] still chatting at the local barbershop, meeting for post-work happy hours and gathering for backyard barbecues?”

He answered: “Not so much. The reality is a complicated and even conflicted mix of respect for a deadly pathogen, concern over its economic implications, and a desire to maintain a sense of American independence in the face of collective tragedy.”

Responses reflected a general sense of personal responsibility that represents those states’ cultures. For instance, Brian Joens, owner of Joensy’s Restaurant in Iowa City, Iowa, said he is doing the best he can under the circumstances:

We’re doing what we would do for the flu, with older people sheltering in place and the rest of us taking the best care we can.

But, let’s be honest: what country do we live in? It’s the USA, which is freedom, freedom to choose. When we get notes from the government saying do this or do that, it feels like that’s not what this country is built on.

People should be smart, and you live with your choices.

Chris Mayes, the owner of Big Red Kia and Oklahoma Motorcars in Norman, is enjoying his freedom. His businesses are open and customers are buying. Mayes told della Cava, “I’m looking out the window of my dealership, and people are everywhere. It’s unbelievable. We’re not on lockdown here.”

But he’s worried that that freedom will end if the virus isn’t contained soon: “When I see images from other U.S. cities, where there’s no one in the streets, very few cars out, that is the total opposite of what we’re seeing here. And I’m absolutely worried about it.”

Andrew Sorrell is a Republican state representative and co-owner of Gold, Guns and Guitars in



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Florence, Alabama. He expressed his concerns about infringements of freedoms put in place in Tennessee, just across the border: “I have liberty concerns with a shelter-in-place order. People just need to be more responsible for themselves, with what they’re doing, where they’re going.”

Gail Terry, a citizen of Cody, Wyoming, told della Cava that people there are taking the threat seriously, without prodding from the state government. Those who sell food are limiting the number of people allowed at a time into their stores while others are offering delivery services. She said that things “look good for us right now [and] we will keep doing what we need to, on our own.”

In Utah, the governor is caught between those of similar mindsets and those who want him to declare a more stringent set of rules rather than just urging Utahans to “stay safe [and] stay home” for the duration.

Salt Lake County Mayor Jenny Wilson is one of those calling for a state-wide shelter-in-place order from Governor Gary Herbert while admitting that, under present circumstances, her county is showing a “flattening of the curve” without additional pressure from above. She told Katie McKellar of Deseret News: “We have more evidence that [the governor’s strong suggestions to stay at home] are working.” Her county has compiled and analyzed data that proves that social distancing is helping: “We now have a hill, not a Mount Olympus” referring to the bell curve of infections reflective of the virus’ infection in the general population.

The takeaway appears to be this: Individuals, left alone, are more than likely to take personal responsibility and make good decisions regarding the coronavirus, provided they are well informed about its true risks.



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