



GOP Governors Say No to WHO Pandemic Treaty

The governors of 24 Republican-led states have sent President Joe Biden a letter announcing their opposition to the proposed World Health Organization (WHO) pandemic agreement, part of the International Health Regulations (IHR). The governors argue that such an agreement threatens national sovereignty and jeopardizes Americans' constitutional freedoms.

Proponents of the treaty argue that such an agreement is necessary due to the risk of another pandemic similar to Covid-19, which unnecessarily paralyzed much of the world in 2020. But the governors argue that the agreement grants the WHO unprecedented powers over America and could lead to an acknowledgment that WHO is the absolute global authority on healthcare.



Yann Forget/Wikimedia Commons
WHO headquarters

“We, as governors of our respective states, stand united in opposition to two proposed instruments currently under negotiation that would purport to grant the World Health Organization (WHO) unprecedented and unconstitutional powers over the United States and its people,” the governors [wrote](#). “These proposed changes could drastically change the role of governors in response to their charge as the state health officials.”

The governors are concerned that the proposed treaty will elevate WHO from its advisory capacity to the foremost authority not just in pandemic emergencies, but on any public-health issue.

“If adopted, these agreements would seek to elevate the WHO from an advisory body to a global authority in public health,” the letter claimed. “Under the proposed amendments and treaty, the WHO’s Director-General would supposedly gain unilateral power to declare a ‘public health emergency of international concern’ (PHEIC) in member nations, extending beyond pandemics to include a range of perceived emergencies.”

Though the WHO refers to the proposal as an “agreement,” it is essentially a treaty, as the governors note. In the United States, the U.S. Senate must approve any treaty by a two-thirds vote. The U.S. president or the U.S. ambassador to the UN may not simply sign a treaty and expect it to have any legal authority.

Furthermore, the treaty as proposed would go against the Constitution. The governors had especially harsh words for WHO’s current Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. “The objective of these instruments is to empower the WHO, particularly its uncontrollable Director-General, with the authority to restrict the rights of U.S. citizens, including freedoms such as speech, privacy, travel, choice of medical care, and informed consent, thus violating our Constitution’s core principles,” the governors, including Ron DeSantis of Florida, Greg Abbott of Texas, and Glenn Youngkin of Virginia, wrote.



Written by [James Murphy](#) on May 29, 2024

The governors came out strongly in favor of federalism as it pertains to future health emergencies, and vowed to refuse any WHO intervention: “As governors, we affirm that public health policy is a matter reserved for the states, not the federal government, and certainly not international bodies like the WHO. We are committed to resisting any attempts to transfer authority to the WHO over public policy affecting our citizens or any efforts by the WHO to assert such authority over them.”

Other Republicans have also denounced the proposed agreement, with Wisconsin Senator Ron Johnson [leading](#) a revolt in the Senate against the proposed agreement. GOP senators [sent their own letter](#) to President Biden in early May.

“In light of the high stakes for our country and our constitutional duty, we call upon you to (1) withdraw your administration’s support for the current IHR amendments and pandemic treaty negotiations, (2) shift your administration’s focus to comprehensive WHO reforms that address its persistent failures without expanding its authority, and (3) should you ignore these calls, submit any pandemic related agreement to the Senate for its advice and consent,” the senators wrote.



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