



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on September 28, 2023

Covid Turned the Medical Freedom Movement Into a Highly Funded Force

For years, the medical freedom movement, popularly caricatured by the establishment media as “anti-vaxxers,” has been considered fringe, its ranks composed largely of grassroots activists without deep institutional support — not surprising, given that the political establishment of both the Right and the Left long ago adopted the medical community’s supposed “consensus” that there are no significant risks to vaccines.

But a major shift has occurred, particularly since Covid-19. As detailed in the [latest installment](#) of a *Politico* series on the medical freedom movement, vaccine-critical groups are now awash in funding.



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As the outlet notes, both the Informed Consent Action Network and Robert F. Kennedy Jr.’s Children’s Health Defense saw their revenue double in 2021 compared to the year prior, per a review of their tax filings. Whereas nonprofits in the medical freedom sphere worked with budgets of a few million dollars just a few short years ago, they now find themselves armed with war chests of over \$10 million apiece.

Prior to Covid, Informed Consent pulled in \$1.4 million in funding in 2017. By 2021, that figure had jumped to \$13.3 million. Moreover, the group’s founder, Del Bigtree, said his podcast grew over the pandemic from thousands to millions of weekly listeners.

“The pandemic in many ways played right into our conversation,” Bigtree said.

In contrast to political committees, nonprofits are not legally required to publicly disclose their funding sources or details about how they’re spending the money they bring in. While tax filings may partially shed light on contributions from other foundations, the majority of their finances are carefully veiled.

For his group’s part, however, Bigtree says Informed Consent Action Network has leveraged the larger war chest to hire more lawyers and scientists. In fact, the nonprofit has reportedly doubled its staff since the pandemic.

Politico reports:

The group was not alone in its pandemic-era growth. A longtime anti-vaccine group Children’s Health Defense, the nonprofit launched in 2011 under the name World Mercury Project, also saw its revenue balloon. The group, which is led by longshot Democratic presidential candidate Kennedy, saw its revenue go from just over \$1 million in 2018 to more than \$15 million in 2021, according to the nonprofit’s federal tax filings.

Those figures do not include smaller state chapters of the group, most of which have launched since 2020. (The largest of the subgroups, a California chapter, reported \$1.2



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million in revenue in 2021.)

Children's Health Defense has, in part, used the new money to grow its operations in Europe, Canada, and Australia, translating its materials into Italian, French, and Spanish.

Dave Gorski, a Michigan-based oncologist critical of the medical freedom movement, said that "Covid vaccines have been the foot in the door for the more general anti-vaccine movement. And unfortunately, that door is open pretty wide now."

"Increasingly there's less and less difference between old school and new school anti-vaxxers," he added. "New anti-vaxxers are lapping up the same old conspiracy theories and pseudoscience."

In other words, the Covid-19 outbreak caused authorities to sacrifice freedom and responsible vaccine-development protocols in order to pressure as many people as possible to become injected with the experimental Covid vaccine — using government mandates, school requirements, threats of job loss, and other forms of compulsion.

This led to conservatives and Republicans coming out almost universally in opposition to such forms of compulsion, and led many on the Right who had previously been skeptical of the "anti-vax" movement to experience a "180" and see first-hand just how dangerous vaccine mandates of all varieties are to Americans' freedoms.

The more-widespread support for medical freedom has meant more funding for activist organizations, with which these groups can more effectively organize activists, sue federal agencies, and expand their reach domestically and abroad.

In one example of how the flood of support and resources is facilitating concrete political victories, a lawsuit funded by Informed Consent Action Network earlier this year forced the state of Mississippi to permit religious exemptions for mandatory childhood vaccinations for the first time in more than 40 years.

Politico also noted that higher budgets allow these medical freedom groups to wear down federal agencies even when they don't score legal victories against them:

While the Mississippi lawsuit was a notable victory, many of the efforts, like a petition by the Informed Consent Action Network for the FDA to revoke approval of a version of the polio vaccine, stand little chance of success, said Dorit Reiss, a professor at the UC Hastings College of Law who specializes in vaccine law.

But such petitions still take up time and agency resources, and provide fuel for the groups' public relations efforts. Responses to FOIA requests can be used to amplify anti-vaccine talking points regardless of context.

In short, the medical freedom movement is not only scoring more victories in the legal realm, it's gaining a stronger position in the war for public opinion.

Ironically, the establishment's draconian vaccine policies amid the Covid-19 pandemic turned out to be the best thing to happen to the medical freedom movement in decades.



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