



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on July 30, 2021

Texas Gov. Abbott Tightens Restrictions on Mask and Vaccine Mandates

Texas Governor Greg Abbott has reminded state authorities that they are forbidden to force residents to wear a mask, after the CDC [introduced](#) a new face coverings guidance in a bid to stop the spread of the “Delta” variant. It is also illegal in the Lone Star State to require residents to get vaccinated against COVID-19 or show proof of vaccination.

On Thursday, Abbott issued [an executive order](#) reiterating his opposition to mask mandates, COVID-related business restrictions, and vaccination requirements and issuing fines of up to \$1,000 on those local governments, public school districts, health authorities, and all other government entities who fail to comply. The order does not apply to government-operated hospitals or detention facilities. It says state residents can voluntarily wear face coverings if they choose to do so.

The governor also called on state hospitals to deliver daily reports on their capacity to the Texas Department of State Health Services to send to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Explaining the order that aimed at providing “clarity and uniformity in the state’s Covid-19 response,” Abbot [stated](#):

The new Executive Order emphasizes that the path forward relies on personal responsibility rather than government mandates. Texans have mastered the safe practices that help to prevent and avoid the spread of COVID-19. They have the individual right and responsibility to decide for themselves and their children whether they will wear masks, open their businesses, and engage in leisure activities.

The governor added that vaccines are plenty and, while they are believed to be the best defense against the virus, they will remain voluntarily to get, “never forced.”

Abbott incorporated an [executive order](#) he first implemented on May 18, which forbade local governments and school districts from issuing mask mandates. The new order emphasizes the removal of all public health limits on Texas businesses, stating there are “no COVID-19-related operating limits for any business or other establishment” as part of an effort to “ensure the ability of Texans to preserve livelihoods while protecting lives.” Private businesses can still decide for themselves to limit capacity or require masks indoors.



AP Images
Greg Abbott



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In contrast to the yet-again updated CDC recommendation to mask up in COVID hot spots regardless of one's vaccination status, Abbott's order is encouraging, but not requiring, the use of facemasks in areas with elevated coronavirus transmission rates.

The order underlines that no governmental entity can compel any individual to receive a COVID-19 vaccine administered under an emergency use authorization; state agencies and political subdivisions shall not adopt or enforce any rules that would require an individual to provide, as a condition of receiving any service or entering any place, documentation regarding the individual's vaccination status.

Some local lawmakers met the order with harsh criticism. State Representative Donna Howard of Austin, who was among more than 50 members of the Texas House of Representatives who jetted from Austin to D.C. on chartered flights to block voter-reform bills by denying a quorum, [said](#), "This is beyond inaction. This is the Governor tying the hands of health experts who are trying to keep Texans healthy as cases and hospitalizations increase."

Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins [called](#) the move strictly political: "The governor's order is based on polling data of what Republican primary voters want to hear." The judge praised the CDC for issuing the recommendations based on "the most recent data regarding the much more contagious delta variant and what scientists and medical professionals have learned thus far to combat the spread and harm of COVID."

This week, Abbott has upset another liberal group with his anti-mandate stance, namely, a large teacher's union that called on the governor to reverse his order that prohibits mandating children to wear masks while at school. The *Dallas Morning News* [reports](#) that the Texas State Teachers Association, an affiliate of the three-million-member strong National Education Association, raised the alarm as COVID-19 cases are on the rise throughout the state while children younger than 12 are still noneligible to get inoculated. The governor's office turned the request down, stating that it is up to people to decide whether or not to send their children to school masked up.

COVID-19 hospitalizations have [sharply](#) risen in Texas in the past month, although the number of occupied beds is still nowhere near the peak level seen in January. Similarly, COVID-linked fatalities are at near-record [lows](#), according to the Texas Health and Human Services data.

While CDC treats the surge of COVID-19 cases as a deadly threat to public health, the Biden administration [imposes](#) vaccination mandates for the federal employees, and cities of San Francisco and New York, as well as the state of California, order municipal workers to get vaccinated, there is little evidence that the "Delta" strain is actually "deadlier" than previous mutations or the "original" virus.

[Speaking](#) to *The New American*, Dr. Richard Fleming stated that the virus, which had been designed in a laboratory, is trying to return to its original form. As the virus evolves, it is shedding the artificially added parts that were added in a lab to make it more deadly.

The World Health Organization (WHO) admitted last month that it would be wrong to assume "Delta" was unusually lethal. "We don't have an indication of increase in mortality from the delta variant," [stated](#) Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO's COVID-19 technical lead, while noting that research on the new strain is still underway.



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