



Written by [Dennis Behreandt](#) on March 16, 2020

Your Papers Please: Statists Call for Domestic Travel Restrictions in USA

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A key essential freedom, and one that is a natural right that may not be restricted by government, is the freedom to associate with whom you want, when you want. This is the foundation for much of the market economy, since in the market — ideally — you get to choose whom you buy from and whom you sell to. Furthermore, this freedom is the foundation for travel. In other words, you are free to choose to travel to the next town, county, state, or elsewhere to visit friends or family, or do business for any other inscrutable purpose you might have, subject only to the requirement that you not erode someone else's private property rights.



In response to the coronavirus pandemic, statisticians are eager (to put it mildly) to end your right to travel and freely associate with others. The Chinese communists set the standard for this early in the outbreak in Wuhan, but the same playbook has since been followed in Italy and is starting to be followed elsewhere in Europe.

And, statisticians in the United States are positively begging for the exact same thing here.

Leading the way is New York Governor Andrew Cuomo. In a *New York Times* [op-ed](#) on Sunday, March 15, the governor called for the use of the military to fight the pandemic and called on the Trump administration to institute a nationwide lockdown.

Calling for closings nationwide, Cuomo wrote that local closings have “federal implications.” If a state closes businesses, he said, “people typically cross state lines to look for open businesses elsewhere. If the purpose is to keep our citizens home and out of crowded spaces, such inconsistency in state policies is counterproductive. There should be a uniform federal standard for when cities and states should shut down commerce and schools, or cancel events.”

Cuomo went further the next day and outright [called for a national system of closures](#) during a Monday morning appearance on *Good Morning America*. “There has been no country that has handled this that has not nationalized,” Cuomo intoned. “This patchwork quilt of policies doesn’t work. It makes no sense for me to do something in New York and New Jersey to do something else. I close the bars and they go to New Jersey.... Every state cannot come up with its own rules. You’ll just have people going from state to state.... That’s the last thing we want. Set the national standards and let’s live with them. Otherwise,



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again, you come up with this ad hoc system that's not going to work."

Also calling for elements of a national lockdown is Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. "We're seeing cases where people clearly contracted it [COVID-19] somewhere else and brought it here," [DeSantis complained](#) according to Politico. Specifically, DeSantis indicated that he wants the Feds to restrict domestic air travel. "I think the administration needs to look at domestic flights from certain areas where you have outbreaks," [he said](#).

Currently, there are no plans at the federal level for domestic travel restrictions as desired by Cuomo and DeSantis and others, though President Trump has said his administration is considering travel restrictions in the U.S. "specifically from certain areas."

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, who has been one of the administration's most visible experts on the evolving pandemic, indicated on March 15 that such restrictions might not be coming.

Appearing on ABC's *This Week* program, Dr. Fauci was asked about possible domestic travel restrictions.

"I mean, they've been discussed, but not seriously discussed," [he said](#), according to *The Hill*. "I don't see that right now or in the immediate future. But remember, we are very open-minded about whatever it takes to preserve the health of the American public."

As bad as the COVID-19 pandemic might be, or as bad as other disease outbreaks might be in the future, just as much damage can be inflicted by the erection of tyrannical barriers on economic activity through the curtailment of individual natural rights and freedoms. If government restricts travel and commerce, the market will be increasingly unable to supply goods and services to meet demand. When that happens, shortages become common. Eventually, they become debilitating. Poverty increases and access to medicines, food, and other necessities diminishes. A slippery slope is created that leads, at its end, to many unsavory possibilities.

Tyrannical regimes have tried policies like these before in attempts to create ideologically desired social orders. The results have often been disaster, with many lamentable examples resulting in mass death and displacement of populations.

Free-market functions, if left alone, will keep people supplied with the goods and services they need during the crisis. Moreover, the functioning of the free market will allow scientists and the companies that employ them to develop and then market treatments for the disease. A massive regulatory regime that halts all economic activity and nationalizes industry will fail in this case as it has in every other instance that it's been tried.

We can stop the pandemic, and we don't have to become the Soviet Union to do it.

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