



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on August 27, 2021

## Chicago Police Unions Vow to Oppose the City's COVID Vaccine Mandate

Chicago's largest police union, the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), along with the city's other police unions, has strongly come out against the COVID vaccine mandate for law enforcement as mayor Lori Lightfoot announced all city employees must get their shots.

On Wednesday, Lightfoot, quoting rising numbers of COVID infections, [said](#) that vaccination "has been proven to be the best way" to keep the community "safe and healthy." "And so," the mayor continued, "we have decided to join other municipalities and government agencies across the nation, including the U.S. military, who are making this decision to protect the people keeping our cities and counties moving," as she ordered 33,000 city workers to complete their vaccination by September 15. Lightfoot did not specify the consequences of refusal to comply, but said the employees will have an option to file for medical and religious exemptions, which would be reviewed by the city's Department of Human Resources on a "case-by-case basis."



AP Images

The president of the Chicago FOP, John Catanzara, has vowed to oppose the mandate, saying his group is "100% against mandated vaccines for our members," according to a statement given to [Fox 32](#). "This vaccine has no studies for long-term side effects or consequences. None," Catanzara [told](#) the *Chicago Sun-Times* earlier this week, as the talks of the mandate have been floating around. "To mandate anybody to get that vaccine, without that data as a baseline, amongst other issues, is a 'Hell, no' for us," he remarked.

On Wednesday, as the announcement had been made, Catanzara doubled down on the union's opposition to the mandate, [implying](#) Lightfoot's order was like something out of Nazi Germany, and that "We don't want to be forced to do anything. Period."

"It ain't just our guys," Catanzara continued, "It's the sergeants, lieutenants and captains. This is a united front."

ABC [reported](#) that the four unions representing Chicago police officers "from the rank-and-file up to captains," the FOP among them, met virtually Tuesday with Lightfoot's team to discuss the vaccine



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mandate. Police said it appears the plan is being “rushed through” and expressed they were not happy with it.

Sergeant Jim Calvino, the president of the Chicago Police Sergeants Union, said, per the outlet, that he is “totally against” the mandate, and so is his group. “They put plans in motion, that they have no implementation power. Let’s go in and do this, and then after we’re ready to start, like, okay, how are we to implement this, how are we gonna get the people vaccinated?” Calvino added that the order will “definitely further erode the morale, and also the trust in the department, city,” while stressing that there is a “significant pushback” against the mandate.

Lieutenant Michael Stiscak, the president of the Chicago Police Lieutenants Union, stated that if vaccination becomes a condition of employment, then, by the law, the city must negotiate it with the workforce. “It just cannot be enacted by them [the city officials],” he added.

Catanzara also said that with such orders, the city would only hasten the exodus of officers from the forces: “This has literally lit a bomb underneath the membership. And what are they gonna do when four or five thousand coppers say, ‘Screw you. I’m staying home. You’re not making me get this f—ing vaccination.’ Don’t pay me. That’s fine. We’ll see you in court,” he said, while claiming the city is talking about putting people who refuse to get the jab “on no-pay status.”

The warning comes amid a record pace of retirement from the Windy City police. *The New American* [reported](#) last month that between January and June, some 363 officers called it quits, and another 56 were expected to retire within a month. The police officials argued the forces were demoralized by the mayor’s anti-police rhetoric and unbearable work conditions. As a result of this and numerous other factors, the city’s violent crime rate is continuing to [skyrocket](#).

Police officers in other major cities are opposing forceful COVID vaccination. The New York Police Department’s largest union [vowed](#) to sue mayor Bill de Blasio if he imposes a vaccine mandate on their members. While the NYPD was one of the first groups eligible for the vaccine in January, only 47 percent of the department’s workforce — which includes just under 35,000 uniformed officers and nearly 18,000 civilian members — is now fully vaccinated, per the [New York Post](#).

In the beginning of August, the union representing Denver police officers [indicated](#) that it was trusting officers to make their “own choices on how to maintain their health” and that they would not abide with the vaccination mandate after Mayor Michael Hancock announced a public health order requiring all city employees to get vaccinated against COVID. Fifty-seven percent of the officers were reportedly unvaccinated at that time.

Earlier this month, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker [announced](#) that all state employees in “high-contact settings” such as prisons and veteran’s homes, will be ordered to get the coronavirus vaccine by October 4. At that time, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) also unveiled it had created a portal called “Vax Verify” that will allow individuals to show their vaccination credentials, aka “vaccine passports,” to businesses and other entities. On Thursday, Pritzker [imposed](#) a statewide vaccine mandate for all teachers and staff for pre-kindergarten through college, as well as for healthcare workers and college students.



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