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Pence Stresses Federalism in Dealing With Pandemic and Need to Defer to Local Officials

In [an interview](#) with CBS News' John Dickerson on *Face the Nation* that aired June 28, Vice President Mike Pence responded to Dickerson's statement that the spike in COVID-19 cases is occurring in states that are reopening early, implying that the Trump administration is more focused on the economy than on controlling the pandemic.

Dickerson asked: "The states that are reopening are having some of the biggest problems. Did the reopening happen too early?"

Pence replied, in part:

I know there's a temptation to associate the new cases in the Sunbelt with reopening, but it's important to remember that ... states like Florida and ... Texas actually began to open up ... in early May.... we did not see any significant movement. In my conversations with governors in Florida and in Texas and in Arizona in particular, we're monitoring very closely their hospitalization rate.

Dickerson disputed the value of monitoring states' hospitalization rate for the COVID-19 virus, stating that, "the situation shouldn't be existing in the first place." Comparing the European experience to Florida's, he said: "Europe waited longer to reopen and they have seen less trouble in reopening. In Florida since Memorial Day, which was a new stage of reopening, cases are up 165 percent."

Pence offered one possible explanation for the spike in Florida and in other Sunbelt states like Texas and Arizona: "It's clear across the Sunbelt that there's something happening, particularly among younger Americans. And that's why we fully support [Texas] Governor Abbott's decision to close bars and limit restaurants. We fully support ... steps taken in Florida and elsewhere. And we'll continue to support those efforts."

Dickerson responded by noting that in Texas, Abbott said the precondition for opening the economy is wearing a mask. He segued by asking, "Why doesn't the president, who has some suasion in the country, come forward and say everybody should wear a mask, which is what all the governors are saying?"

Pence reinforced a principle that most people should keep in mind when seeking the best solution to controlling the pandemic:

Well, first, we believe that every state has a unique situation. And I want to be clear..., while we're monitoring about 16 states that are seeing outbreaks, it represents about 4 percent of all the counties in this country, 34 states are not seeing a rise in positivity and they have different measures, different requirements and different guidance in place.... One of ... the elements of the genius of America is the principle of federalism, of state and local control. We've made it clear that





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we want to defer to governors. We want to defer to local officials ... and people should listen to them.

It is refreshing that this administration — instead of calling all the plays from Washington — is respecting federalism and allowing the governors to take the lead in dealing with the pandemic within their own states.

Image: screenshot from [YouTube video](#)

Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at wmass@thenewamerican.com.



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