



Written by [James Murphy](#) on October 25, 2021

“Let Us Work!” Chicago Police Rally Against Lightfoot’s Vaccine Mandate

Today, police officers and other city workers affected by the mayor’s draconian vaccine mandate rallied at Chicago’s City Hall and let Mayor Lori Lightfoot know exactly how they felt about the vaccine mandate and how it affects them.

Currently, city workers in Chicago are required to report their vaccine status on the city’s website, get the experimental COVID-19 vaccine, or agree to be tested for COVID-19 twice weekly on their own time and at their own expense. Failure to comply results in employees — police officers included — to be sent home without pay until they comply.



AP Images

FOP Lodge 7 President John Catanzara addresses protestors at Chicago City Hall

Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Lodge 7 president John Catanzara — a frequent foil of Lightfoot — [addressed](#) the outraged crowd. According to the union chief, the tiff is less about the vaccine itself than it is about Lightfoot’s unilateral decree to stop pay for noncompliance.

“This has always been about union protections and the city’s obligation to come to the collective bargaining table and negotiate what these policies are going to look like, especially when it affects peoples’ paychecks,” Catanzara said.

Catanzara then pressed officers who are willing to go without pay not to wait until they are called in and given a direct order to comply with Lightfoot’s mandate. Instead, the FOP chief encouraged officers to take the bull by the horns and state their intentions to the city’s human resource department.

“The city and the police department [have] continually tried to control the trickle of how many officers are on a no-pay status, so it doesn’t seem so bad,” Catanzara said. “But I’m telling every officer who is willing to go through the process, disobey an illegal direct order and go into a no-pay status, to not wait your turn and show up tomorrow at 35th and Michigan, Human Resources, at 10:00am tomorrow morning, and we’re going to see just how many officers we’re really talking about, that this city can, literally, lose in the blink of an eye, if this mandate doesn’t change sooner rather than later.”

As of today, the FOP reports that 26 officers have been sent home without pay for refusing to comply with the mayor’s mandate.

As Catanzara wrapped up his speech, the protesters began chanting, “Let us work! Let us work!”

Some Chicago aldermen agree that the mayor didn’t have the right to issue such a mandate without their consent. An ordinance to insist on City Council approval for any “no-pay” mandate is on the council’s docket for the next meeting.

According to Ward 23 Alderman Silvana Tabares, one of the authors of the new ordinance, the issue is not about the vaccine itself, but about Lightfoot’s authoritarian manner of imposing the mandate.



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“What I disagree with is the mayor making this decision and forcing it down people’s throats, Tabares said.

Lightfoot retorted: “I think people in her ward need to ask, why is it that this alderwoman is carrying the water for a guy like [Catanzara]. She knows very well, this will never see the light of day. But the fact that she’s willing to put her name on it is something really quite extraordinary and frankly, dangerous.”

The battle over Chicago’s vaccine mandate has crossed city borders, with several area police agencies already saying that they will not send officers to help should Chicago request them.

“I believe the polarization between the community and police is only reinforced by current Chicago politics,” Kane County Sheriff Ron Hain said in a statement. “I will not send my personnel to Chicago, unless an officer is under direct duress, because I cannot support this slanted agenda. I also will not allow my deputies to be subjected to use force in the city and be under the prosecutorial jurisdiction of the Cook County State’s Attorney.”

Dupage County Sherrif James Mendrick agreed and said such a request would be a logistical nightmare.

“It would be like the Chicago Bears training all season, playing all their games and then benching their team and then calling the Green Bay Packers to play the Super Bowl with a different coach, a new play book that they’ve never seen,” Mendrick explained. “Because we don’t know what they’re rules and regulations are. We don’t know where their beats are, where their high and low crime areas are. We would come in blind through all of that.”

Clearly, Mayor Lightfoot has some serious choices to make. She can back down from her authoritarian vaccine mandate or risk police officers walking off, en masse, in one of America’s most dangerous cities.

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot clearly has a big problem with her police department. It’s ironic because, especially in Chicago, the mayor’s office has enjoyed a very cozy relationship with the various city unions for decades. Now, it’s the unions — especially the FOP — that are fighting the mayor’s office tooth and nail and putting her authority at risk.



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