



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on October 20, 2020

Michigan Barber Who Defied Shutdown Mandates Has Charges Dropped

Karl Manke, a 78-year-old barber in Owosso, Michigan, who has been cutting hair for 59 years, can rest a little easier. Charges for violating local health orders and defying Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer's COVID mandates [were dropped](#) last Friday.

Manke gained national attention and notoriety as a "folk hero" among many who saw that Whitmer's edicts went far beyond the law. When she shut down the state initially, Manke complied. But after she unilaterally extended her mandates beyond April 30 without gaining approval from the legislature to do so, Manke reopened his barbershop, saying at the time, "I feel the governor is not my mother, never has been."



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When reminded that he was violating Whitmer's mandates, Manke said, "I could care less. If they want to put me in jail, put me in jail... I will be governed ... but not ruled. This is a police state action."

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When he filed an appeal against a court order shutting him down, his attorney wrote,

This case is about forced compliance with unchecked executive authority under the guise of public health.... The state's entire case rests upon fear, speculation and hyperbole.

Rather than providing evidence of infection being spread by Mr. Manke, the state just repeatedly proclaims the general dangers from the COVID-19 virus.

We live in a free country whose Constitution remains relevant and in force, even during a pandemic.

The Michigan State Supreme Court agreed. In its majority opinion it said, "The sheer magnitude of the authority in dispute, as well as its concentration in a single individual [Whitmer], simply cannot be sustained within our constitutional system of separated powers."

Manke made national headlines and appeared often on *Fox News* and as a guest on Glenn Beck's radio show. He seized the opportunity and began offering memorabilia — t-shirts, coffee mugs, and the like featuring his image and declaring him to be "America's Barber" — to supporters. A budding author, he also saw an enormous increase in the sales of his novels.

Customers from around the state made the trip to Owosso for a haircut. They set up a GoFundMe account for him, which raised nearly \$100,000. His resistance even inspired a protest at the state capitol where fellow barbers gave free haircuts to his supporters.



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The charges were dropped after the State Supreme Court ruled against Whitmer. “Based on that ruling,” said local prosecutor Scott Koerner, “we didn’t feel the charges could go forward.”

Said the folk hero/barber: “It is definitely a weight off my shoulders. I just want to earn a living.... I am not a health threat to anyone.”

But he proved to be a threat to Whitmer’s overreach, adding, “A barber stopped her. A barber!”

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