



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on May 14, 2021

“No ‘Freedom Papers!’”: Hundreds Rally Against Vaccine Passports in Orange County

Hundreds of protesters gathered outside the Orange County (OC) Board of Supervisors meeting on May 11 to protest against digital proof of vaccination, i.e., vaccine passports, after county officials [added](#) it to their vaccination app a few weeks ago without explanation.

The passport is being promoted by the OC Health Agency as a way for businesses to allow or restrict patrons from receiving goods and services based on whether or not they have been vaccinated.

[According](#) to *Orange County Register*, the county had planned to give anyone who received vaccines at sites run by the OC Health Care Agency the choice to get an electronic QR code they could keep in their smartphone and show if requested to get into a business or entertainment venue.

County officials had already approved [changes to a contract](#) with the creator of the *Othena* vaccine-scheduling app that would allow the addition of digital vaccine records. County CEO Frank Kim said he won't move forward unless the Board of Supervisors specifically directs him to. The discussion on the app's enhancement with a "Proof of Vaccination" option was on the Board's May 11 [meeting agenda](#).

OC officials have [said](#) repeatedly they are not requiring, and don't plan to require, that anyone get vaccinated, or show proof that they have been vaccinated, to receive county services. State and federal officials also have said they don't plan to mandate a vaccine passport system.

At the same time, according to the [state reopening guidelines](#), California does allow large venues such as stadiums and convention centers to admit more people if they are tested for COVID or show proof of vaccination, de-facto creating an incentive for businesses to require a proof of vaccination.

"Of course, it is a form of a vaccine passport," [said](#) Dr. John Swartzberg, a UC-Berkeley infectious-disease expert. That California has not embraced the label is not surprising, he said.

[As reported](#) by *KABC*, the protests in OC spilled inside the building where the Board of Supervisors was meeting, with more than 700 people signing up to speak during the board meeting.

"This is against the law. It would strip us of our privacy rights," said one of the speakers.

"You are not going to brand us with a barcode like we are cattle. The Nazis looked like they were winning, too, for a little while," said another.



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From business owners to lawyers to everyday residents, the list of speakers went on for hours.

“Being that I am a Black American, and you’re asking me now to carry ‘freedom papers’ is absolutely appalling. I will bring every Black member of this community back down here if this goes any further,” said a speaker.

“This isn’t communist Russia, this isn’t communist China, this isn’t Nazi Germany. We should have the freedom. The Jews had passports, look what that led to,” said another.

Many speakers [said](#) they were concerned over establishing any sort of digital vaccine-verification method would lead to mandated vaccinations, infringe on personal privacy, enable tracking capabilities and lead to discrimination based on medical information. People also urged the board to ban private businesses from requesting proof of vaccination, calling the practice unconstitutional.

Many residents [wanted](#) county supervisors to ban businesses from requiring proof of vaccinations at Tuesday’s meeting.

Katrina Foley, one supervisor who stands firm in favor of a vaccine passport, believes most people support it and that only a small faction of people oppose it.

“These individuals are mostly people who don’t believe in vaccinating in the first place. They’re also people who in the past year have denied that COVID exists, denied the pandemic,” Foley [argues](#). She went even further and added that these are “the same individuals” who “have marched on our United States Capitol, participated in the insurrection.” In other words, who else but extremists would reject electronic proof of the unapproved, experimental genetic injection?

Providing a digital record to people who opt in “is just a professional courtesy to businesses,” Foley said. She encouraged anyone worried that vaccine records would be used to track their activities “should throw away their iPhones and get off Facebook.”

However, in response to the public outcry, the board ended up [voting](#) 4-1 to “pause” a plan to offer a digital vaccination record.

The “noise” over the topic “has now reached a point where there is more harm than good that comes from it,” Chairman Andrew Do [said](#) before proposing to pause the QR code development.

The supervisors said they plan to revisit funding at a July 27 meeting.



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