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HEALTH

Renewed Hysteria Shows Why We Need A Commission For Covid Accountability

BY: HELEN RALEIGH

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Only through a national commission that would assign accountability for Covid failures can we ensure America won't

repeat the same mistakes.



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One of the most disturbing images of the Covid-19 pandemic was when a teacher tried repeatedly to [force a mask on a crying toddler](#), despite his visible distress.

In some ways, the U.S. government at all levels, especially among public health officials, treated all of us like toddlers, compelling us to endure draconian Covid measures from [mask mandates](#) to vaccine mandates despite many [scientific studies](#) showing none of them have stopped Covid from spreading in our society and infecting people. There has been no national reckoning on what went wrong in our pandemic response and who should be held accountable, and there are new [signs](#) those same ineffective and sometimes cruel Covid measures are coming back to dictate Americans' lives this fall.

White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre [announced](#) this week that President Joe Biden would start wearing a mask again after his wife tested positive for Covid. The president and the first lady had received Covid vaccines and boosters before and were infected anyway. But the facts haven't stopped President Biden from [encouraging](#) all Americans to get Covid booster shots this fall. Meanwhile, Rosemary Hills Elementary School in Maryland

[handed out KN95 masks](#) to third graders because more than three students were infected with Covid. At [the University of Michigan](#), students who test Covid-positive still have to leave their dorm (even if in a single room) and isolate themselves in a hotel for five days.

This renewed Covid hysteria is unwarranted because, three years after the coronavirus outbreak spread from China to the rest of the world, we have learned that many government measures have failed to prevent Covid's spread while causing undue harm. For example, [research](#) from as early as fall 2021 showed that vaccines didn't prevent the virus from transmitting, and natural immunity is at least as protective as vaccines. Yet the federal government, many state and local governments, and businesses imposed vaccine mandates on employees, and many people lost their jobs due to being unable or unwilling to meet the mandates. The media and tech companies shut down debates and vilified anyone who raised questions.

Similarly, research on the effectiveness of masks, including a [study](#) published by the Cochrane Library, which "analyzed 18 randomized controlled trials that aimed to measure the impact of surgical masks or N95 respirators on the transmission of respiratory viruses," found that wearing a mask "probably makes little or no difference" in preventing transmission. Yet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) told Americans that masks provided more protection against Covid than vaccines. Based on the CDC's misleading recommendations, about [39](#) states imposed mask mandates, and some included children as young as 2 years old. However, [research](#) showed masking "impacts children's ability to recognize faces and emotions."

Other Covid measures, such as lockdowns, caused a spike in mental health problems among Americans, especially youth. Prolonged school closures and remote learning caused widespread learning loss. "If the recent learning loss can't be reversed, it would equate to a 1.6% drop in lifetime earnings for the

average K-12 student, or a nationwide total of some \$900 billion,” according to [The Wall Street Journal](#).

Need for a Review of Mistakes

Historically, after a significant event that profoundly affected America, whether it was the Kennedy assassination or the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the U.S. Congress established commissions to investigate what happened, what went wrong, who was responsible, and how we could prevent mistakes from happening again or be better prepared. Yet so far, there is no Covid-19 commission in the U.S., which makes us an outlier among our peers. Countries from Norway to Sweden to the United Kingdom have either started or even finished their public inquiries into their governments’ Covid responses.

Harvard professor and epidemiologist Dr. Martin Kulldorff and Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, a physician and professor at Stanford Medical School, [believe](#) the U.S. should establish a bipartisan Covid Response Commission so we can learn what went wrong and be better prepared next time. These two professors established their credibility in the public health policy debate during the pandemic by co-authoring, along with Oxford University professor Dr. Sunetra Gupta, [the Great Barrington Declaration](#), a public petition calling for an end to the lockdowns and returning life to its pre-pandemic norm as early as fall 2020. Had both the Trump and Biden administrations listened to their advice, the U.S. could have reduced or even avoided many adverse outcomes we see today, from the mental health crisis to learning loss among our children.

For a Covid Response Commission to be credible, Kulldorff and Bhattacharya recommend it tackle four areas: public health measures, including the closing of schools, businesses, sports, religious services, and cultural events; the treatment of Covid patients; vaccines, including their development and approval; and the discourse and censorship of scientific debate, including tech

ensorship. Kulldorff and Bhattacharya also worked with several other scientists to produce a [document](#) with essential questions the commission should ask, including on vaccine mandates: “Why were mandates pursued without carveouts for those with immunity due to prior infection? Why were so many [people fired](#), destroying careers and reducing health care capacity?”

There were some congressional efforts to establish a Covid commission. In February 2021, U.S. Sens. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., and Susan Collins, R-Maine, [introduced](#) bipartisan legislation to establish such a commission. But then Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York never brought the bill to a floor vote because the Biden administration [reportedly](#) resisted the idea. After the Republicans took the majority in the U.S. House, they [established](#) a subcommittee on the coronavirus pandemic, which included six House Democrats. Still, some [accused](#) the committee of being overly partisan.

To ensure an inquiry into the Covid response is objective and neutral, Kulldorff and Bhattacharya [recommend](#) broadening the Covid Response Commission’s membership to include not only experts on public health but also patients and members of the public who were harmed by the government’s policies. A Covid commission is a national reckoning Americans deserve.

Among all the sound recommendations Kulldorff and Bhattacharya make, the only one I have to disagree with is their insistence that the commission avoid “to blame or to prosecute.” Without holding accountable the high-level government officials who advocated for the most harmful Covid measures, Americans will suffer under the same destructive policies next time. In fact, the news about Rosemary Hills Elementary School’s mask mandate for third-graders this week is a warning that “next time” could be now for some.

Apparatchiks Are Back

Speaking of accountability, no one has done more to erode Americans' trust in public health and science than Anthony Fauci. Yet in a recent CNN interview, Fauci [continued](#) to argue for masks' effectiveness despite scientific studies consistently contradicting his assertion. Next week, Chicago's former mayor, Lori Lightfoot, will [present](#) her Covid policy to students at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health, even though her [double-standard Covid responses](#) have drawn much criticism and students in Chicago's K-12 public schools suffered one of the nation's longest lockdowns.

Since the left dominates much of the corporate media and public institutions, only a broad-based commission can hold former government officials such as Fauci and Lightfoot accountable and prevent them from continuing to mislead the public and exert undue influence on public policies in the present and future.

Kulldorff and Bhattacharya stated, "Our collective response to the Covid-19 pandemic constituted history's biggest public health mistake." Only through a national commission that would assign accountability can we ensure America will not repeat the same mistake.

Helen Raleigh, CFA, is an American entrepreneur, writer, and speaker. She's a senior contributor at The Federalist. Her writings appear in other national media, including The Wall Street Journal and Fox News. Helen is the author of several books, including "[Confucius Never Said](#)" and "[Backlash: How Communist China's Aggression Has Backfired](#)." Her latest book is the 2nd edition of "[The Broken Welcome Mat: America's UnAmerican immigration policy, and how we should fix it](#)." Follow her on Parler and Twitter: @HRaleighspeaks.