

The Delray Democrat

DeSantis Threatens all Floridians¹

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Governor DeSantis signed an executive order not only ending the COVID-19 health emergency in Florida, but went so far as prohibiting all county, city, and local governments from continuing or enacting ANY health and safety measures to protect their citizens. His order purports to prohibit all social distancing, mask mandates, vaccine requirements, occupancy limits, etc. Let's be clear, there is no legal basis for his order, no medical basis for his order, no scientific basis for his order, and no logical basis for his order. This is 100% about politics. DeSantis' sole purpose here is politics, not the safety and well-being of Floridians.

He is plainly appealing to the Trump base solely for personal political advantage. DeSantis referenced "freedom." Do you ever notice that those who harp on freedom are often those who are in fact infringing on the very freedoms they falsely claim to profess?

This is not in any way an issue of freedom. The tyrant of Tallahassee does not value freedom, but rather espouses the same authoritarianism as his mentor Donald Trump. He is about his own political power, not the needs of the people he is supposed to serve. Giving people the choice to be vaccinated or to maintain proper health safety measures in no way infringes on personal freedom. Rather, it affords everyone a range of choices.

If your community is hit by one of the dangerous COVID variants or strains, DeSantis says you cannot do anything about it. If your schools suffer an outbreak threatening your children's safety, DeSantis says you cannot do anything about it. If your area hospitals become overrun and exceed capacity, DeSantis says there is nothing you can do about it. The tyrant of Tallahassee has spoken. He has taken all freedom of action away from those duly elected leaders at all levels (other than himself), preventing them from doing what is necessary to protect their communities. Arguably these leaders are in a better place to determine what is right and necessary for their communities than he is. Unfortunately, DeSantis would rather Floridians needlessly die from COVID than cede any amount of control or not appease his base.

¹ *The Delray Democrat*, May 2021, p. 4.

This is not about freedom, but about dishonesty. DeSantis is playing to the ignorant, disingenuous anti-vaccine base focused more on politics than any bona fide objections to the vaccine. Medical evidence supports vaccination to protect individuals, families, workplaces, and the community. Even the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which was associated with a less than 1 in a million chance of a rare blood clot in certain individuals, was medically sound compared to the risks of the pandemic. Instead of kowtowing to dangerous extremists, DeSantis and other leaders ought to be encouraging responsible behavior and public health.

Schools, businesses, restaurants, theaters, etc., all have an obligation to protect their employees and customers. They have the right to require vaccinations based on medicine, science, law, and the facts. They have the right to establish reasonable social distancing, mask requirements, and occupancy limits designed to keep everyone safe. Most not only want to completely reopen, as is in their interest to do, but also to simply maintain the minimal safety measures necessary to ensure safe and continued operations. Even that is too much for DeSantis.

Those who refuse the vaccine or refuse to comply with safety measures have the right to stay home or take their business elsewhere. They do not have the right, legally, medically, or morally, to impose their high risk of COVID transmission on the rest of society who are willing to make the small sacrifice to protect the community at large and especially their own families. It is simply unfathomable that DeSantis would force a strong risk of COVID transmission on those trying to do the right thing. If you don't want a vaccine, then stay home, participate virtually, order things online, etc. It is your choice.

DeSantis is waging a right-wing culture war, playing to an extremist base. He is attempting to exercise absolute authority and deny that authority properly given to local and county officials. He can't have it both ways. If we want to eliminate the need for the various health and safety measures that have allowed us to survive the pandemic and arrive at the point where we can reopen things, we have to remain vigilant and smart. We need people to be vaccinated so as to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 and the dangerous strains and variants threatening every part of the country. If DeSantis wants to foolishly support and encourage individuals to refuse the vaccine, then he must allow local communities, especially the businesses, houses of worship, etc., to determine what is necessary for them to remain open and protect their employees and customers.

Let's do the right thing for people, let's keep everyone safe and the economy open by smart medical and health measures. Tell the tyrant of Tallahassee to stay out of local business and to stop threatening our families.