This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit https://www.djreprints.com.

https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-covid-19-vaccine-mandate-requirement-100-employee-federal-delta-variant-mask-11631306245

OPINION | BUSINESS WORLD

With Biden Vaccine Plan, Politics Is Fully in Charge

Lumping 75 million unvaccinated Americans into one category is wedge partisanship, not science.

By

Holman W. Jenkins, Jr.

Sept. 10, 2021 5:50 pm ET

President Biden announces a sweeping federal Covid-19 vaccine mandate from the White House, Sept. 9.

PHOTO: ANDREW HARNIK/ASSOCIATED PRESS

It's impossible for politics not to be paramount in a time like Covid, when voters are steeped in anxiety, when politicians know their career survival is at risk with every decision.

Often, *we want* politicians to be concerned with the effect of their words, not just their scientific accuracy, because their words can cause things to happen in the world.

In such circumstances "follow the science" is a political statement containing multitudes of ironies.

READ MORE BUSINESS WORLD

- Is This a 'Normal' Covid Winter? November 26, 2021
- After COP26, Electric Vehicles Galore! November 23, 2021
- CNN's Modified Limited Steele Climbdown November 19, 2021
- The Other Danchenko Dossier? November 16, 2021
- Durham Sails Into Deep Waters November 12, 2021

Which is why even major news outlets have become realistic about the politicization of booster shots inside the Biden administration. Though it merits a column of its own, the same is true of its promotion of masking as a back-to-school solution: This is mainly a prophylactic for politicians against a perhaps inevitable Covid wave this fall.

Axios, the news source with an elitist-conformist bent, minces no words about the latest initiative, Joe Biden's sweeping new vaccine mandates: "They are a strategic effort, as he's watched his own approval numbers slip underwater in the past month, to shift frustrations about climbing Delta variant cases onto the millions who've either actively or passively rejected the shot and other precautions."

Mr. Biden plays on the trained willingness of Democratic media consumers to believe Trump voters are the vaccine resisters, however oddly this sits with public-service ads in blue states trying to coax minority voters and unionized healthcare workers to accept vaccination.

He plays on the lingering "zero Covid" delusions of the left, which hugged "herd immunity" once vaccines became available and Trump voters could be portrayed as the last obstacle to Covid's elimination from the earth.

He hopes you will embrace false assumptions: Our vaccines, alas, are not sterilizing—they do not prevent infection, though they reduce the risk of severe illness and death. This attenuates the argument that others' failure to be vaccinated is a threat to you, and, of course, it negates the zero Covid dream.

Most important, he flogs a divide between the vaccinated and unvaccinated that simply makes little sense at this point. Do read National Institutes of Health chief Francis Collins's blog post last week, full of mock surprise that a study his agency financed finds

that, by December 2020, at least 100 million Americans had been infected, five times the official count.

By now, 150 million likely have had Covid-19. And just as we are only learning now about the strength and duration of vaccinated immunity, we are learning about natural immunity, including how it might vary with the severity of your Covid infection.

Why does this matter? With Covid far more prevalent in our population than our dummy media has been willing to report, our situations aren't all the same anymore. A reader who had Covid, is low-risk by age, and who shares a medical anomaly that led to people like him being excluded from the vaccine trials, says he remains unvaccinated for now because he can't know whether it would improve his risks.

A reader in his 80s who survived a bout of Covid, and later experienced mysterious heart trouble, is struggling now with whether to get a recommended third shot.

One size does not fit all but we do know that "older people still account for most Covid-19 deaths," as the New York Times recently rediscovered. More than 85% of eligible over-65s have been vaccinated; only a few million remain. Persuasion aimed at this group would give us real leverage over deaths and hospitalizations if that's what we want. We won't get it from Mr. Biden's attempted coercion of 75 million unvaccinated Americans, who by now are a mélange, as if they are all the same anti-science know-nothing.

His approach is wedge politics. It will provoke confrontations with red-state governors and old-school civil libertarians. It will rile up anti-vax nuts, who will be portrayed as ordinary GOPers. It does not faintly resemble any strategy you would adopt if your goal was to improve Covid outcomes quickly and efficiently.

It's long past time to stop lying about the Biden administration. The political calendar, with the midterms still a year away and 2024 three years off, is why he wanted a fast-and-dirty Afghan exit while he could still exploit his honeymoon privilege of putting all blame on his predecessors.

His vaccine announcement is more of a piece with his recurrent practice of whipping up the "white supremacist menace" to distract the left than any useful approach to improving Covid outcomes.

In regard to political cynicism, the Biden administration is not more meritorious than average; it is perhaps slightly less so, as you might expect from a politician with Mr.

Biden's history and character.

Appeared in the September 11, 2021, print edition as 'With Biden's Vaccine Plan, Politics Is Fully in Charge.'

Copyright © 2021 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit https://www.djreprints.com.