

**Mandatory vaccination, vaccine mandates, and liberty essay**

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The word liberty is most often heard in our Pledge of Allegiance where it states “with liberty and justice for all” but what does it mean for Americans to have liberty? Liberty is the state of being free within society from oppressive restrictions imposed by authority on one's way of life, behavior, or political views. From a political view, the word liberty has come up many times in conversations over the ongoing covid-19 mandates. This topic has caused households to divide and friendships to end. However, when you take a look into these mandates you can see Americans' liberty is being confiscated by our government.

To truly understand what is currently going on in our country we need to look into the founding fathers and the structure of the American government. While creating the roles of the new government, “America's founders saw it was to protect the rights of individuals, and the biggest threat to individual liberty was the government itself” (Galles, 2019). Our founders set up our government to ensure that our leaders would not get too much power or control in any scenario. President Barack Obama said it best he stated, “The constitution is a charter of negative liberties, says what the states can and can't do to you. But it doesn't say what the state or federal government must do on your behalf” (Obama, 2013). The constitution lays out the rules of government and gives the people power over their bodies and safety. Overall, liberty is in place to ensure our government does not turn into an authoritarian government.

Starting with some examples of liberties being taken we can look at what has been happening to business all over America during the duration of this pandemic. The mass shutdown of businesses happened in March of 2020, and then the shutdowns in different states throughout the last year. Kamala Harris stated “Sadly, during the course of the pandemic, one-third of our small businesses have closed” (Nichlos, 2021). These businesses were forced to close down which caused them to lose the business that they built from the ground up. That in

itself goes against the definition of liberty which is the state of being free within society from oppressive restrictions imposed by authority on one's way of life, behavior, or political views. Our freedom to liberty makes it so no one can have authority over the way we live our lives. The covid restrictions made people change the way we live our lives. At the beginning of the pandemic, states were sending police door to door telling businesses that continue to stay open that they needed to close. When people would not close their doors they started to get fined as a result. Americans had the right to keep their business open and operate as normal if they wished to do so, but that right was taken.

Along with the shutdowns, there are continues post-shutdown mandates about masks and vaccinations that go against Americans' liberty as well. Starting with companies mandate vaccines for all their employees whether they work in the office or at home. At the beginning of 2022, the company Carhartt mandated vaccines for all of its employees. The CEO of Carhartt states, "We put workplace safety at the very top of our priority list and the Supreme Court's recent ruling doesn't impact that core value" (Clothing Company..., 2022). They continued to fire all employees who refused to get the vaccine. This is taking away their rights to choose what they do to their bodies. John Locke once said, "it is one thing to persuade, another to command; one thing to press with arguments, another with penalties" (McDonald, 2021). People are losing their jobs because they will not give up their liberty to follow another's commands. On another note universities all over the United States implemented vaccine and mask mandates. Giving students the choice to make religious or medical exemptions to the vaccine but not accepting all of the exemptions (Insider High, 2021). Looking into one college, Grand Valley University you see a 944 student decline. Which you cannot say is all from the covid mandates but years prior they never had that big of a decline in students. Their retention rate from 2019 to 2021 also dropped

by 3% (GVSU trends, 2020). So why would universities and grade schools put these mandates on their students? It comes down to funding, “The new grant program, Project SAFE (Supporting America's Families and Educators), anticipates using funding within the Department of Education from Title IV, Part F, School Safety National Activities, of the Every Student Succeeds Act... This funding will help districts improve student safety and well-being by advancing strategies to reduce transmission of COVID-19 in schools” (US department of education, 2021). These universities are putting monetary compensation over their students' right to liberty. Telling an individual that they must get vaccinated to get the education that they are paying for opposes a restriction on the way individuals live their lives.

Another point to bring up is how big cities are reacting to the pandemic and the mandates that they are putting in place. Los Angeles and New York City are the best cities to take examples from. They have put mandates in place that make it impossible for unvaccinated individuals to go about their daily functions. The cities themselves implement mandates saying that all businesses must have customers show proof of vaccination. This goes against the citizens and business owners of these cities, taking away their right to make their own decisions on these topics. All of these rules were set into place until March of 2022 when many mandates started to be lifted, “NYC has discontinued the Key to NYC vaccination requirement as of March 7.

Businesses can still choose to require proof of vaccination” (COVID-19..., 2022). The discontinuation of these mandates is happening all over the country. Even though covid numbers are not technically “better” you see a trend of mandates dropping everywhere. The majority of places said that it's due to cases being lowered. But, you see the world transitioning back to what life was like before all of the mandates which make some people relieved and others upset.

Now on the other hand looking into how people view these mandates you have individuals who believe it does not infringe on Americans' liberty. They only see it as the government trying to keep everyone safe. They try to pull political views into this argument which has nothing to do with politics. Their argument at hand is that republicans want rights over vaccines but not abortions (Walker, 2022). But, if they were to look into republicans views they would see “We oppose the use of public funds to perform or promote abortion or to fund organizations, like Planned Parenthood, so long as they provide or refer for elective abortions or sell fetal body parts rather than provide healthcare” (Republican Platform, 2016). They are all for individuals' liberty to choose any medical procedure they choose, they simply will just not fund certain medical procedures. So the one argument they have against this is not even valid. Another well-heard argument is that it is for your and others' safety. But, in the constitution, we were given the right to choose for ourselves how we decide to keep ourselves safe. Just because a mask or vaccine is not mandated does not mean individuals do not have the choice to get vaccinated or wear a mask when they please. It comes down to the fact that everyone has the liberty to make decisions for themselves.

All in all, you can see with the information given that liberty is a core part of the American government and when the government gets too much power it can be taken away. The pandemic is a great example to show what liberty is and how liberty affects Americans a day to day lives.

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