

White House Coronavirus Task Force effectively ended by Trump

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As the coronavirus pandemic continues to spread in the United States, the Trump administration has begun to roll back its White House Coronavirus Task Force. This has in effect ended even token efforts at the federal level to contain the disease now that all fifty states have begun to reopen.

The last time there was a press briefing on the pandemic was on May 22, when there were 1.6 million officially confirmed cases in the country and 97,600 deaths. The last time the task force was assembled, led by Vice President Mike Pence, was May 28, when there were more than 1.7 million cases and at least 103,000 deaths. As of today, the coronavirus has infected nearly 1.9 million people and killed more than 108,000 men, women and children in the United States.

Trump himself has largely stopped talking to his public health advisers. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, last spoke to Trump on May 18 in a call with the governors on the disease, according to CNN. In an interview with *Stat News*, Fauci noted that the president has not been interested in discussing the progress in fighting the pandemic or making a vaccine for the virus in the past few weeks.

He said, “As you probably noticed, the task force meetings have not occurred as often lately. And certainly, my meetings with the president have been dramatically decreased.”

The abandonment of the task force comes in the wake of Trump’s touting of hydroxychloroquine, Remdesivir and Moderna’s vaccine, as well as ingested bleach as cures for the deadly contagion. In each case, Trump was forced to walk back claims that some sort of “miracle drug” had been found in the face of opposition from his own team as well as the medical industry itself.

The rising case numbers and death toll are a warning that, despite the claims at the end of April that the country had succeeded in “flattening the curve,” the pandemic is ongoing. Since mid-May, the number of newly confirmed infections has not been going down nationally but holding steady at an average of 20,000 new cases each day, along with an average of at least 1,000 new deaths.

The pandemic has in particular begun spreading in the American South and West, which had not been initially as hard hit as New York, New Jersey, Michigan, California and Illinois. Now, however, the disease is rapidly spreading in all regions of the country and the case counts per capita in each state are becoming more equal than they were a month ago.

The situation is similar if not worse internationally. The number of new cases each day has been rising since the middle of last month and spiked above 125,000 on May 29. There have been at least 100,000 new cases globally each day for the past seven days, bring the total number of cases to well over 6.4 million. There are at the same time more than 381,000 deaths caused by the pandemic internationally, a number that is poised to accelerate as the virus continues its deadly course.

Despite the increasing dangers from the disease, every state in the US has reopened its economy in some form, pulling back measures that were implemented in an effort to slow the spread of the virus.

Auto plants, Amazon warehouses and meatpacking factories, along with a whole host of other industries where the virus transmits easily from worker to worker, have forced their employees back to work with little to no personal protective equipment. There have already been reports of workers contracting the disease and dying as a result, with no doubt many more instances

that have gone suppressed by the corporations and unreported in the mainstream media.

As a result of these reopenings, numerous scientific models of the pandemic now estimate that the number of cases in the US could soar as high as 4.3 million by the end of the summer, or 5.4 million if physical distancing rules are fully relaxed. The number of dead could rise to 293,000 in this time frame. By the end of the year, there could be as many as 1.2 million dead in the United States alone.

Moreover, no one in the political establishment has made serious mention of the fact that the nationwide protests against police violence will inevitably be followed by a rise in cases of COVID-19 despite efforts by organizers to promote social distancing and the wearing of face masks. The mass gatherings sparked by the murder of George Floyd will certainly spread the virus further, exacerbating an already dire public health crisis.

A further danger is that there is still not a clear understanding of the actual extent of the pandemic in the country. Estimates of the excess deaths in the United States, particularly those attributed to pneumonia, indicate that the true tally so far caused by the pandemic is about 50 percent higher than what is currently acknowledged. The spread of the disease has been similarly noted as being an undercount.

That the spread of the pandemic is not known is due to the dearth of testing in the United States, even now after more than four months of fighting the disease in the country. While the United States has performed the most tests in the world, it currently ranks 35th on a per capita basis.

In addition, because of the nation's large population and massive spread, it was estimated in early May by researchers at the Harvard Global Health Institute that the country as a whole needed to ramp up testing to more than 900,000 a day by May 15 to be able to confidently know where the contagion is present. In the month since these predictions were made, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that, at most, half that are being done each day. The Harvard team explicitly noted that as physical distancing measures are relaxed, the number of tests performed each day will need to grow.

Multiple states as well as the CDC were also recently forced to revise the number of tests it had performed

downward after it was uncovered that they had been counting the number of tests for the disease itself and tests for antibodies of the disease as essentially the same thing. While both are necessary for tracking the spread of the virus, counting them together artificially inflates the actual number of active coronavirus cases.



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