

Trump administration sabotages COVID-19 testing

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The Trump administration is intensifying its murderous efforts to cover up the spread of the coronavirus pandemic through the suppression of testing for the virus, under conditions in which COVID-19 is already raging out of control in the United States.

On Monday, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) modified its testing guidelines, dropping its earlier recommendation that those who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 but who do not yet show symptoms should get tested. The guidelines now state that those who have been exposed and are asymptomatic “do not necessarily need a test,” except if they are vulnerable, or if a health care provider or state or local health official recommends it—which fewer will now do.

The change to the CDC guidelines was made under significant political pressure from the White House, overriding concerns by the administration’s own public health advisors.

Conspiratorial methods were employed. The decision was made while Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top US infectious disease expert, was under general anesthesia for surgery last week. Admiral Brett Giroir, the assistant secretary for health and the US “testing tsar,” had previously falsely claimed in comments to the press that Fauci had signed off on the decision.

In his typically understated fashion, Fauci criticized the new guidelines, telling CNN, “I am concerned about the interpretation of these recommendations and worried it will give people the incorrect assumption asymptomatic spread is not of great concern. In fact, it is.”

The change in testing guidelines will fuel the further spread of the pandemic throughout workplaces, homes and communities, causing untold numbers of

unnecessary deaths and leaving many more irreparably harmed. By the CDC’s own “best estimate,” 50 percent of the coronavirus’ transmission occurs before symptoms appear, with an upper-end estimate as high as 70 percent.

The decision has been roundly condemned by scientists, public health organizations and infectious disease experts. “This change in policy will kill,” Allison Galvani, director at the Center for Infectious Disease Modeling and Analysis at Yale School of Medicine, put it the most bluntly in a tweet Tuesday.

The politically motivated sabotage of the CDC’s public health guidance comes as testing in the US has already declined significantly from its high point near the end of July, from a seven-day daily average of 820,978 on July 29 to 693,794 on August 27, according to the COVID Tracking Project.

Trump and his media supporters, with their accumulated stupidity and callousness, attempted to present the surge in new cases over the summer as the result of increased testing. The president has repeatedly stated his desire to reduce testing, telling a rally in June, “I said to my people: Slow the testing down, please.” Administration spokesmen sought to play off the comment as a “joke,” but Trump belied these claims, saying later, “I don’t kid.”

The disastrous response to the pandemic has already resulted in a horrific toll in human life and suffering, now set to worsen substantially amidst the drive to reduce testing. Over six million have tested positive for COVID-19 in the United States, and nearly 185,000 have died.

The ignorant psychopath occupying the White House has made clear his indifference to the mass death gripping America, stating infamously, “It is what it is.” But the brutal and homicidal policy pursued by Trump

is not the outcome simply or primarily of his own diseased personality. Rather, it is driven by the class interests of the ruling corporate and financial aristocracy, to which Trump gives the most ruthless expression.

Across countless workplaces, working people are confronted with a deadly conspiracy to cover up the spread of COVID-19. As a lengthy article in *Bloomberg Businessweek* Thursday explained, “In the past few months, US businesses have been on a silencing spree.” The companies accused by workers of attempting to muzzle any discussion of COVID-19 cases include top names among America’s corporate giants: Amazon, Target, Smithfield Foods, General Electric, Delta Airlines, McDonald’s, Cargill and others.

“Hundreds of US employers across a wide range of industries have told workers not to share information about Covid-19 cases or even raise concerns about the virus, or have retaliated against workers for doing those things, according to workplace complaints filed with the NLRB and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).”

Workers have found no restitution or redress of their grievances through these state institutions, however, which represent the same corporate interests defended ruthlessly by the Trump administration. As the article notes, OSHA has issued citations against just two companies out of thousands of complaints filed related to COVID-19. As for the NLRB (National Labor Relations Board), a worker at the restaurant chain The Cheesecake Factory who filed a complaint with it said, “It doesn’t feel like it has a lot of teeth. I’m not convinced it will ultimately change their behavior, or any other company’s.”

Not mentioned in the corporate weekly *Bloomberg Businessweek*, but exposed in numerous interviews with autoworkers, teachers and other workers on the *World Socialist Web Site*, is the role of the trade unions in enforcing these corporate gag orders. From the United Auto Workers to the American Federation of Teachers, the unions have used the same fraudulent arguments, falsely invoking privacy laws in an attempt to prevent workers from sharing information and getting a real picture of the spread of the pandemic in their workplaces. At the same time, they have served as company PR reps, touting illusory safety measures

that have been all but discarded.

Top Democratic Party politicians, for their part, have responded to the CDC’s change by falsely posturing as champions of a scientifically informed response to the pandemic. But the Democrats, a party of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus, have worked at the local, state and federal level to pursue the same basic class policy as Trump: to enrich the financial aristocracy, including voting virtually unanimously to pass the CARES Act and transfer trillions of dollars to the super-rich at the expense of the working class. While voicing insincere and hollow criticisms of Trump’s response to the pandemic, they are just as complicit in engineering the premature reopening of businesses and schools, driving workers and their children back into death traps in order to ensure that profits continue to be pumped out.

These conditions have set the stage for an eruption of opposition in the working class of historic proportions. Already, autoworkers and teachers have begun to establish new democratic organizations, rank-and-file safety committees independent of the unions. These committees are raising demands that correspond to the scientific response necessary to secure public health, including the disclosure by employers of the true spread of COVID-19 in workplaces; full income protection for unemployed, furloughed and quarantined workers; regular, freely provided testing; and an end to the victimization of those who blow the whistle on unsafe conditions.

These committees must be established and their demands taken up at workplaces throughout the US and beyond, forming a vast network of rank-and-file workers’ organizations that take as their starting point what workers need, not what the ruling class and its representatives claim can be afforded.



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