

“It’s really all about the money”

Lollapalooza 2021: A superspreader event, thanks to Illinois Democrats

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Exposed to the highly transmissible Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, the Lollapalooza festivalgoers who gathered in massive crowds in downtown Chicago, packed onto buses and in subways, and visited restaurants and bars, will be taking the pandemic home.

The four-day music festival has been held in Chicago since 2012, and from July 29 to August 1, attracted an estimated 100,000 attendees each day. Official numbers have not been released. The music-fest offered a range of popular acts of the 2000s, including Foo Fighters, Miley Cyrus, Tyler the Creator, Limp Bizkit, Playboi Carti, Post Malone, Modest Mouse and Trippie Redd, attracting mostly young people from all over the country.

Aerial photographs of massive crowds were seen on television. An official Lollapalooza sign, whose photograph circulated on social media, read: “An inherent risk of exposure to COVID-19 exists in any public space where people are present. You voluntarily assume all risks related to exposure to COVID-19.”

Voicing the basically criminal viewpoint of the ruling class when it comes to the fate of the population in the pandemic, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot said, “I feel very good about what we’ve done. Obviously, we’ll know a little more in a week or 10 days.”

The festival was held as new COVID-19 health protocols were announced for Chicago, including indoor masking for all, and an updated travel advisory of quarantine on arrival for non-vaccinated people coming from Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas and Wyoming. In response to questions on whether holding the festival was the right

decision, the mayor pointed to “millions of people” at other outdoor events as well as the baseball season.

On the opening day, Lightfoot and her wife appeared on stage with the Austin, Texas-based Black Pumas. The mayor declared Lollapalooza was “the largest music festival anywhere on the globe this year.” She continued, in a boastful vein reminiscent of Donald Trump, “The rate of vaccination in this crowd is off the charts. Thank you for masking up and vaxing up.”

City officials claimed 90 percent of attendees were vaccinated, while another 8 percent, while unvaccinated, provided evidence of a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours of the start of the festival. Only 600 people were reportedly turned away for lack of paperwork.

Dr. Emily Landon, University of Chicago Medical Center immunologist, spoke to NBC 5 in no uncertain terms: “I think a lot of people are going to get COVID at Lollapalooza. The real problem is not so much a bunch of young people who come into Chicago getting COVID at this event. The real problem is them taking it back to places that have very low vaccination rates... I think continuing to have Lolla at that level of capacity was a bad idea even before there was a pandemic, and I’m shocked that we’ve agreed to go back to that same level of capacity.”

She observed, “It’s really all about the money.”

On Friday, the state of Illinois reported more than 2,300 COVID-19 cases, and the city of Chicago’s seven-day rolling average is 206 per day, prompting new measures. While calling for vaccination and the wearing of masks, Commissioner of Chicago Department of Health Dr. Alison Arwady said there are no plans to shut down Chicago amid the increase in

infections, a message Lightfoot repeated on Sunday.

The criminal character of Lightfoot's decision to host a superspreader event becomes even clearer when one considers the threat posed to the city's essential workers in service, health care and transit. Even worse is the impact on the most vulnerable communities, which successive Democratic administrations have long neglected, divested of public infrastructure and services like schools and clinics, and where police function as an occupying force. The poorest neighborhoods on the south and west sides that still have vaccination rates lower than 50 percent include Austin, Auburn Gresham, Deering, Roseland and South Shore. Much of the rest of the city has had at least one dose of a vaccine.

In response to questions arising from the massive crowds traveling throughout the city and gathering downtown, Arwady said there is "no goal or current plans to close down Chicago again." She also said, "We need people once again to step up to get vaccine and, for now, use masks indoors—even those who are vaccinated. In Chicago, we can be open and be careful at the same time. Being careful means getting vaccinated."

While the Chicago Transit Authority requires masks to be worn, very few masks could be seen on photos of festival-goers traveling to and from downtown on public transit.

Not a single "left" Democrat or "progressive" elected official or organization stood in opposition to the decision to expose the country to the risks involved with hundreds of thousands of people partying over four days during a new phase pandemic. "Democratic Socialist" Alderman Carlos Ramirez Rosa did not reply to questions to his Twitter account demanding to know why this was allowed to take place.

Billionaire Democratic Governor J.B. Pritzker had originally planned to attend, saying last week, "I intend to go to Lollapalooza. I'm bringing my wife and few friends to Lollapalooza." However, his press secretary told NBC 5 on Sunday, "Out of an abundance of caution, with cases on a sharply increasing trajectory and with the CDC's finding Friday that vaccinated individuals can transmit the virus, the governor did not attend Lollapalooza." Needless to say, the governor did not bother warning the public.

This is the last year that C3 Events, the company that

puts on Lollapalooza, has a contract with the city. Due to the pandemic, last year's event was held online, but the company still had to pay the Chicago Park District \$750,000 under the agreement, according to the *Chicago Tribune*. The Park District also receives 5 percent of sponsorship revenue in excess of \$3.25 million and 5 percent of food and beverage revenue in excess of \$3 million, which amounted to \$7.4 million in 2019. At the beginning of the deal, the park district got 11 percent of net admission revenue, and that sum increased to 15 percent this year from 14.5 percent in 2019.

The *Tribune* also reports that the contract was agreed to by then-Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who appointed the Park District board. At the time, "Lollapalooza's owners included C3, Live Nation and William Morris Endeavor, the Hollywood agency where the mayor's superagent brother, Ari Emanuel, was co-CEO [and] had a financial stake in the festival, while he also served on the board of Live Nation, until he was forced to step down earlier this year amid antitrust concerns."



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