

California's "endemic plan" sets the stage for unending COVID-19 infections and deaths

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Almost every capitalist government is now engaged in a concerted effort to scrap all remaining mitigation measures to slow the spread of COVID-19, with many doing so by falsely claiming that the virus has become "endemic" and is therefore nothing to worry about.

Many principled epidemiologists and other scientists have opposed the politicization of the term "endemic," which indicates a predictable and controllable level of disease in a given geographic region. In contrast, after two years of the pandemic, the spread of COVID-19 remains unpredictable, totally uncontrolled and global in scope.

In the US, the campaign to declare the pandemic over is being orchestrated by the White House, which meets with state governors weekly. The White House has sought, in the words of *Politico*, to "condition" the American public to a "new normal" based on letting COVID-19 spread unchecked.

This propaganda campaign is driven not by science, but by the demands of the corporations and financial elite. Their aim is to fabricate a narrative that COVID-19 is harmless in order to maximize profits under the guise of a "return to normalcy."

On Wednesday, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky signaled that the CDC will soon lift its masking recommendations, saying, "We want to give people a break from things like mask-wearing."

Among the leading spokesmen for the campaign to declare COVID-19 "endemic" is California's Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom, whose entire political career has been financed by the state's ruling elite.

On January 12, 2022, a day when 128,757 Californians were officially infected with COVID-19 and hospitalizations were rising rapidly at the peak of the Omicron surge, Newsom said the state was "preparing for not the pandemic phase of this reality, but the endemic phase of this reality and how we live with future variants." He added, "we'll be making public those detailed strategies in the next few weeks."

On Thursday, when California recorded the highest number of COVID-19 infections and second-highest number of deaths of any US state, Newsom presented the official "endemic plan" under the acronym "SMARTER," which stands for shots, masks, awareness, readiness, testing, education and Rx, meaning treatments. Hailed by the corporate media as a "scientific" plan that sets a precedent for other states, in reality it amounts to a total capitulation to the pandemic and acceptance of unending mass infections and deaths.

At a press conference unveiling the plan, Newsom declared, "We are moving past the crisis phase into a phase where we will work to live with this virus."

He stated, "We have all come to understand what was not understood at the beginning of this crisis, that there is no end date, that there is not a moment where we declare victory," adding ominously, "This pandemic won't have a defined end. There's no finish line."

The 30-page document outlining the plan elaborates on these themes. It begins by noting, "We are recovering from the intense Omicron variant surge when millions of Californians were infected. It is clear the virus will remain with us for some time, if not forever."

One of the central features of the plan is to do away with tying COVID-19 health metrics to specific policies such as mask mandates, instead creating a stockpile of masks and other PPE to implement "targeted" responses when new variants inevitably emerge and cause surges of infections, hospitalizations and deaths.

Total state funding provided for these limited measures is only \$3.2 billion. This is roughly 1.5 percent of the over \$200 billion accumulated by Tesla CEO and California resident Elon Musk since the start of the pandemic and less than 0.5 percent of the \$770 billion military budget Biden is requesting for next year.

Regarding masks, the plan frames the issue as a matter of individual choice, stating, "Use of masks should be supported by all who want to use them." On Wednesday, the day before the release of the "endemic plan," California

lifted its statewide mask mandate.

On schools, the plan advocates “an ongoing transition away from quarantining students,” adding that “students potentially exposed to COVID-19 can remain safely in-school.” It warns parents to “prepare for the eventual change to universal school masking,” which is expected to be announced on February 28.

Significantly, Newsom’s plan was hailed by Ezekiel Emanuel, who described it as “a comprehensive strategic plan to guide the state of California into the next phase of COVID-19.” He added, “As in so many things, California’s SMARTER program can help the rest of the country to transition to a new normal.” Indeed, others have predicted that the California plan will likely be replicated by other Democratic-led states.

The release of Newsom’s plan comes a little over a month after Emanuel published a paper that first advocated a “new normal” based on ending all tracking of COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths. These recommendations, hailed by the media, are being steadily implemented with the backing of the White House.

Emanuel has long called for the lowering of life expectancy and health care spending and his philosophy can be described as eugenicist. In the words of University of South Carolina philosophy professor Jennifer A. Frey, Emanuel “thinks of disabled and elderly people as useless and ineffectual.”

The “new normal” advocated by Emanuel, Newsom, Biden and virtually the entire political establishment deliberately endangers at least 7 million immunocompromised people for whom the COVID-19 vaccines provide very little protection, as well as tens of millions of elderly people.

Speaking on a podcast Monday, immunologist Dr. Kristian Andersen stated that for the next 10 years or longer, “We should probably expect that most people will get infected a couple of times a year, and we should expect 200 to 250,000 deaths or so in this country alone.” The majority of these deaths will be of immunocompromised and elderly people, and there is no upper limit to the number of deaths that the ruling elite is prepared to accept.

The moves to lift pandemic mitigation measures are deeply unpopular, as the majority of the population strives to put an end to the needless suffering and death that have characterized the past two years.

According to a recent poll conducted by the UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies, only 20 percent of registered voters in California support the ending of mask mandates in public settings, including only 6 percent of Democrats and 46 percent of Republicans. A poll by CBS News-YouGov found that across the US, 56 percent of

Americans support mask requirements for indoor venues.

Rather than implement the necessary measures to stop the spread of COVID-19, the ruling elites and their political and media spokesmen seek to manipulate language to present the pandemic as over and persuade society to move on and act as if the crisis has passed.

In reality, the pandemic remains in a highly precarious state. Scientists throughout the world are raising alarm bells over the dangers posed by the BA.2 Omicron subvariant, with many calling for the World Health Organization (WHO) to give it a separate Greek letter due to its unique characteristics. A preprint of a major study from Japan was released this week, showing that BA.2 is roughly 1.4 times more contagious than BA.1, appears to cause more severe disease, roughly equivalent to the Delta variant, and can evade existing treatments.

The working class must draw the necessary conclusions from the past two years and the deepening efforts by the ruling class to disarm the population by declaring the pandemic over. The only viable solution to the pandemic is through the unification of the international working class armed with a strategy of global elimination.

Through temporary paid lock-downs, mass testing, contact tracing, the universal provision of high quality masks, and the deployment of all other public health measures on a world scale, the pandemic could be ended in a matter of weeks and millions of lives saved.

The fight against the pandemic must be connected to the fight against imperialist war. Faced with an insoluble domestic crisis for which it has no solution, the American ruling class seeks to deflect mounting internal tensions outwards and is tobogganing towards war with Russia. Having accepted nearly 1 million deaths of Americans from COVID-19 over the past two years, it is fully prepared to accept tens of millions more in what could quickly spiral into World War III.

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) is the only political tendency in the world fighting to stop the pandemic and the drive to war. The paramount task facing workers and youth today is to join and build the ICFI as the revolutionary leadership of the international working class.



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