

Arkansas reports first case of monkeypox

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On Tuesday, the first case of monkeypox in the state of Arkansas was identified by the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH). The exact location in the state has yet to be revealed.

According to ADH Medical Director for Immunizations Dr. Jennifer Dillaha, “Arkansas has been monitoring cases of monkeypox in the US.” Dillaha goes on to state, “While this news is concerning, monkeypox is not as contagious as other viruses, like COVID-19. We encourage anyone who feels they may have been exposed to monkeypox to please contact their health care provider and be tested.”

The reported symptoms of monkeypox include fever, swollen lymph nodes, head and muscle aches, exhaustion, and a painful rash which occurs between 7 to 14 days after exposure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Transmission may occur through direct skin-to-skin contact with infectious rashes and scabs, or body fluids, including contaminated items, such as clothing and unsanitary surfaces.

Moreover, officials also report monkeypox’s potential to be transmitted through respiratory emissions during prolonged, poorly-ventilated, face-to-face contact. This form of transmission is occurring despite the CDC having dismissed the prognosis that it was an airborne illness in June.

On May 7, 2022, the United Kingdom Health Security Agency had confirmed monkeypox in a British citizen who also returned from Nigeria. However, as with the maligned mishandling of the coronavirus pandemic, cases reached in the hundreds, spanning myriad countries on virtually every continent. By May 21, 2022, nearly 100 confirmed and suspected cases spanning 12 countries were reported by the World Health Organization. Just days later on May 24, monkeypox infections increased to at least 20 countries with 300 infections reported in total.

The outbreak of monkeypox internationally and in the United States sheds further light on the policy of mass infection adopted by the capitalist class against the working class.

The monkeypox outbreak comes amidst another rising wave of COVID-19 in the US. The endless waves of infection have been facilitated through the criminal policies of not one, but two presidential administrations. Officially, more than 1 million Americans have died as a result of contracting COVID-19, and more than 87.8 million have been infected. Arkansas has reported more than 869,000 infections and more than 11,589 deaths.

In Arkansas, the state government has all but stripped any mitigating measures to deal with the Alpha, Delta and myriad infectious subvariants of Omicron (BA.4 and BA.5 and the newly-discovered “Centaurus,” or Omicron BA.2.75). Moreover, the health care system in Arkansas is deplorable; it will not be able to endure another pandemic.

According to the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement’s website, “Arkansas is ranked 30th out of 47 states and the District of Columbia in healthcare affordability.” The average household income in the state is just under \$50,000. This equates to the incomes of two people living under the same roof who earn paltry wages ranging between \$13 to \$15 an hour. With the loss of freely available vaccines, many households will forego new shots altogether.

As the cost of petrol, electricity, and food stuffs rise, companies like Walmart and Tyson Foods (whose headquarters are located in Arkansas) rake in record profits. For their part, workers are suffering cuts in real wages impacted by inflation and concessions contracts signed by various trade union outfits. Non-unionized workers can look forward to receiving a dreadful 50 cent average raise a year in their hourly wage.

On Thursday, Republican Governor Asa Hutchinson

declined to call for a school teacher pay increase in the state legislature's special session, scheduled for next month. "In terms of the increase in teacher salary," he stated to reporters, "there is not support in the Legislature for it, so I'm not putting it on the agenda." The governor originally had considered raising the lowest-paid teaching salary to \$42,000 while giving all educators a \$4,000 across-the-board raise in 2023.

This is but one front of a multi-directional assault on the working-class. The Supreme Court's June 24 decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, rendering abortion no longer a Constitutional right, was immediately followed by Arkansas' enacting a "trigger law" which automatically outlaws abortion in the event *Roe* is overturned. Arkansas is one of 13 states enacting such laws.

On May 22, in an attempt to lessen the blatant barbarism of the Supreme Court's and state's decision, Republican Governor Asa Hutchinson said the abortion ban "could be revisited" to make exceptions for rape, incest, and to save the life of the mother. However, with his term ending soon, and former Trump White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders likely to succeed Hutchinson as governor come November, it is seemingly unlikely such exceptions will be granted.

The working class is in dire need of a program which provides the solution to eradicate not only COVID-19, but to prevent the next pandemic. That program is a socialist program, based on meeting the needs of every man, woman, and child: health, housing, work, and food security, including the securing and safeguarding of Constitutional and democratic rights.



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