

# White House to shut down COVID response task force

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The White House will close down its COVID task force in May, when President Biden plans to allow the public health emergency declared three years ago to expire. Even though thousands of Americans are dying each week in the pandemic, and millions face Long COVID and other health consequences short of immediate death, the US government has abandoned all significant public health measures and effectively declared the pandemic over.

Non-governmental health care and media institutions are following suit. Earlier this month, Johns Hopkins University shut down its daily tracker of COVID infection, hospitalization and death totals, citing the ending of daily reporting by most states. This tracker was the independent data source most widely cited by health care researchers and media accounts.

The *New York Times* announced Thursday it was ending its own daily tracker, the last major media effort to keep track of the pandemic's day-to-day impact on the American population. The newspaper will simply republish the weekly figures issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, meaning that there will be no separation between its coverage of the pandemic and the official "line" of the Biden administration.

As it has long been in military-intelligence issues, the *Times* will be nothing more than a mouthpiece for official propaganda on questions of public health.

The ending of the COVID response team was reported Thursday by the *Washington Post*, which quoted a statement from an anonymous "senior administration official," whose comments dovetail with passages from President Biden's recent speeches.

"As a result of this administration's historic response to COVID-19, we as a nation are in a safer, better place than we were three years ago," the official told

the *Post*. "COVID no longer disrupts our lives because of investments and our efforts to mitigate its worst impacts. COVID is not over, fighting it remains an administration priority, and transitioning out of the emergency phase is the natural evolution of the COVID response."

Biden has let it be known that when the current public health emergency declaration expires on May 11, he will not attempt to renew it. This will mean an immediate end to an array of social and health care benefits for millions of working people, including automatic extension of Medicaid health care coverage for the poor. State-by-state eligibility reviews will begin taking effect, and dozens of states expect to remove as many as seven million people from the Medicaid rolls in the course of the following year.

Closing down the task force is one more step in Biden's effort to portray the COVID pandemic as over and end all special public health measures to combat it. This is motivated not only by the pressure from American big business to abandon any restraints on its operations and send all workers back to their jobs producing profits. It is also a political concession to the Republican right, which has long denounced lockdowns and limited measures like mask-wearing, and increasingly questions even vaccines.

COVID task force coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha, the latest in a series of official liars hired to put a scientific gloss on administration pandemic policies, reportedly will leave office in May. He has already given up his White House office, moving to the Executive Office Building across the street, more distant from the Biden inner circle.

The task force chief of staff departed without being replaced, and other top public health positions remain vacant. Biden has not nominated a successor to Dr.

Anthony Fauci, who retired from the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) last December, or for Dr. Francis Collins, who retired as director of the National Institutes of Health, the umbrella agency which includes the NIAID, in December 2021.

Democratic Senator Patty Murray, the top congressional Democrat on pandemic policy, issued a statement that oozed the same type of phony reassurance as the unnamed White House official. “While the threat of COVID is not gone and we cannot grow complacent, it’s clear we are in a much different place today than three years ago,” she said. “Now we need to stay focused on ensuring a smooth transition so no one falls through the cracks, and making sure we are applying all the lessons from this pandemic.”

The “lessons” that the US ruling class has learned, however, center on how to increase its own wealth even amid horrific conditions of mass infection which have killed more than 1.1 million Americans and inflicted long-term damage to the health of millions more. Congress joined in passing the bipartisan CARES Act three years ago, providing an enormous financial bailout for corporate America, and a few weeks of inadequate wage subsidies for most working people, now a distant memory.

Some figures demonstrate that the real purpose of the COVID task force, far from informing and educating the population about the dangers of the pandemic, was to spread a blanket of complacency and misinformation, particularly during Dr. Jha’s year-long tenure.

As a result of the systematic promotion of misinformation and complacency by the government and media, only 16 percent of Americans have had the most recent version of the COVID vaccine, the “bivalent” version that combined vaccines against two different versions of the omicron sub-variant. Only 9 percent of Americans are deeply concerned about the threat of COVID, according to a recent poll, while mask usage and other minimal protective methods have been largely abandoned.

The *New York Times* announced the end of its daily data-gathering and reporting on COVID-19 in a brief statement issued Thursday. “The Times will continue to publish its Covid tracking pages for the United States, only now they will be based on the latest information

available from the federal government, not the Times’s data set,” the newspaper said.

“While Covid still kills thousands across the United States every week, the data from state and local sources is reported less frequently and less reliably,” the statement continued. “The comprehensive real-time reporting that The Times has prioritized is no longer possible.”

Some states report cases only infrequently or not at all.

The *Times* also conceded that the actual number of infections was “widely undercounted because of the rise of at-home testing, the results of which are mostly unreported.” In other words, the figures which provide the basis of official declarations that the pandemic is over are entirely misleading and concocted. They are rigged to prove the political case that is being made: to demonstrate the “success” of the Biden administration and various state governments in “fighting” the pandemic.



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