California's New Vaccine Laws Should Be a Model for All States

By Alex Berezow, PhD — September 16, 2019

Usually, when we have something to say about California, it's bad. After all, this is the state that gave us Proposition 65, a smorgasbord of insane public health policies, and 38 seasons of The Bachelor and The Bachelorette.

But now, the state has done something good. Very good.

The saga began in late 2014 when a measles outbreak occurred at Disneyland, the happiest place on Earth. In the wake of that public health (and public relations) nightmare, California decided to crack down on anti-vaxxers in the state. So, it passed a law banning personal belief exemptions for vaccines. At the time, it was hailed as one of the toughest in the nation.

Anti-vaxxers weren't going to surrender so easily, however. Soon afterward, there was a noticeable increase in the number of medical exemptions issued by doctors. The Los Angeles Times reported that medical exemptions tripled from 2015 to 2016, indicating that anti-vaxxers found sympathetic doctors to hand out exemptions. So, California cracked the whip again.

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The state passed new laws aimed at reducing the number of dubious medical exemptions. The two most important provisions allow officials to investigate doctors who give out five or more vaccine exemptions each year and schools in which the immunization rate falls below 95%. These are fantastic changes, and other states (or perhaps the federal government) should implement them.

As usual, anti-vaxxers weren't going to go quietly into the night. Before the new laws were passed,
California state Senator Richard Pan, who is also a pediatrician, was assaulted. According to KQED [4], his assailant posted a video of the attack on Facebook and said, "Yes, I pushed Richard Pan for lying, laughing at us and for treason."

KQED goes on to report that:

"...the video depicts Bennett strolling in downtown Sacramento, discoursing on a series of topics he says he's concerned about: CIA "crimes," including what he called mind control efforts; angel statues on the Capitol Mall he described as preparing the way for the arrival of Lucifer and rule by the Antichrist; how President Trump has committed blasphemy "against the blood of Jesus Christ"; and the use of chemtrails for "mass spraying ... to stop the solar radiation" he describes as necessary to human health."

These people constitute the intelligentsia behind the anti-vaccine campaign. No wonder a woman thought it appropriate to throw a menstrual cup (supposedly) full of blood [5] at California legislators.

Likely venting her frustration, Jennifer Kent, director of California's Department of Health Care Services, posted a tweet [6] in which she compared anti-vaxxers to flat-earthers and used some vulgar language. She resigned shortly thereafter, probably marking the first time in California history that a bureaucrat resigned for speaking the truth.