

Governors Cuomo, Newsom Play Politics with Pfizer's Life-Saving COVID Vaccine



By Alex Berezow, PhD — November 10, 2020

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo would rather allow more Americans to become infected with and die from coronavirus than to allow an imperfect vaccine distribution plan to proceed.



Credit: MTA / Patrick Cashin / Wikipedia
[1]

Thanks to Herculean efforts by pharmaceutical companies all over the globe, the biomedical research community is now on the verge of producing the world's first successful coronavirus vaccine. Pfizer, in collaboration with German firm BioNTech, has announced that its vaccine is 90% effective at preventing COVID.

Of course, we can't just take Pfizer's word for it. The data the company produces will be put through the ringer by the FDA, whose job is to make sure that the vaccine really is safe and effective. Even though Pfizer is seeking emergency use authorization, that is not a pathway to putting a dangerous or ineffective product on the market. The FDA will make certain of that.

Dumb...

But Governors Andrew Cuomo of New York and Gavin Newsom of California know better than the scientists at the FDA. Both governors, who have made a very big deal about "following the science," have decided that political posturing is now important than following the science from Pfizer and the FDA.

NY Governor Cuomo's [commentary](#) [2] on the COVID vaccine is jaw-droppingly stupid. After saying that it was "bad news" that the vaccine is coming out while the Trump Administration is still in office, he said that he would work with other governors to fix or stop a vaccine distribution plan "before it does damage."

Let's pause for a moment to analyze what he just said. In Cuomo's mind, it is better to allow more Americans to become infected with and die from coronavirus than to allow an imperfect vaccine distribution plan to move forward. (All distribution plans are imperfect. There is simply no magic formula for determining who should get the vaccine and when.) However, his decision is at least consistent in light of the fact that Cuomo insisted on jamming COVID patients into nursing homes, killing thousands of his own citizens.

...and Dumber

Not to be outdone, a [coalition of western states](#) [3], led by California Governor Newsom, will examine vaccine data for themselves to determine if the FDA's decision is correct. That's like saying that we don't trust Einstein's calculations on general relativity, so we're going to ask a bunch of undergraduate physics students to verify his results.

As imperfect as it is, the FDA is the gold standard for regulatory approval. According to [BioSpace](#) [4]:

*Several states have pledged to review COVID-19 vaccines themselves, after U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Emergency Use Authorizations EUA), to ensure safety and efficacy. **A robust review, however, is unlikely. In reality, if state reviews go forward, they most likely will be cursory.***

"To replicate an FDA equivalent review in any state would be extremely challenging and costly," Jeremy M. Levin, D.Phil., chairman of BIO, told BioSpace.

The FDA employs some 17,000 people, "and replicating that in the states seems an extraordinary and unnecessary burden for taxpayers."

In other words, states have neither the resources nor the expertise to review FDA decisions. As is almost always the case, whenever a politician says, "Follow the science," [what he really means](#) [5] is, "Do what I say, and the data be damned."

Hopefully their foolish, politically motivated decisions won't kill more Americans.

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2020/11/10/governors-cuomo-newsom-play-politics-pfizers-life-saving-covid-vaccine-15143>

Links

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Cuomo#/media/File:Andrew_Cuomo_2017.jpg

[2] <https://news.yahoo.com/cuomo-bad-news-pfizer-announced-145002578.html>

[3] <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/10/27/western-states-join-californias-scientific-safety-review-workgroup-to-ensure-safety-of-covid-19-vaccine/>

[4] <https://www.biospace.com/article/bio-chairman-fda-vaccine-reviews-too-complex-and-costly-for-states-to-replicate/>

[5] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2020/04/28/coronavirus-follow-science-means-do-what-i-say-14748>