

How Washington Governor Jay Inslee Stole Thanksgiving. Is Christmas Next?



By Alex Berezow, PhD — November 17, 2020

Washington State Governor Jay Inslee has canceled Thanksgiving as part of a new COVID lockdown. The Grinch of Whoville couldn't have created a better policy.



Credit: SounderBruce / Wikipedia [1]

As the coronavirus surges throughout the United States and much of the world, legitimate fears of overwhelmed hospitals and a spike in COVID-related deaths have returned. What should be done about them?

Some restrictions are absolutely necessary. Those that are meant to stop super-spreader events, like restrictions on mass gatherings or the number of people who can attend sporting events, are appropriate. So are restrictions that are meant to prevent close contact with other people. That is why shuttering bars makes sense, since these are places where people choose to mingle with strangers, talk loudly over even louder music, and occasionally exchange bodily fluids.

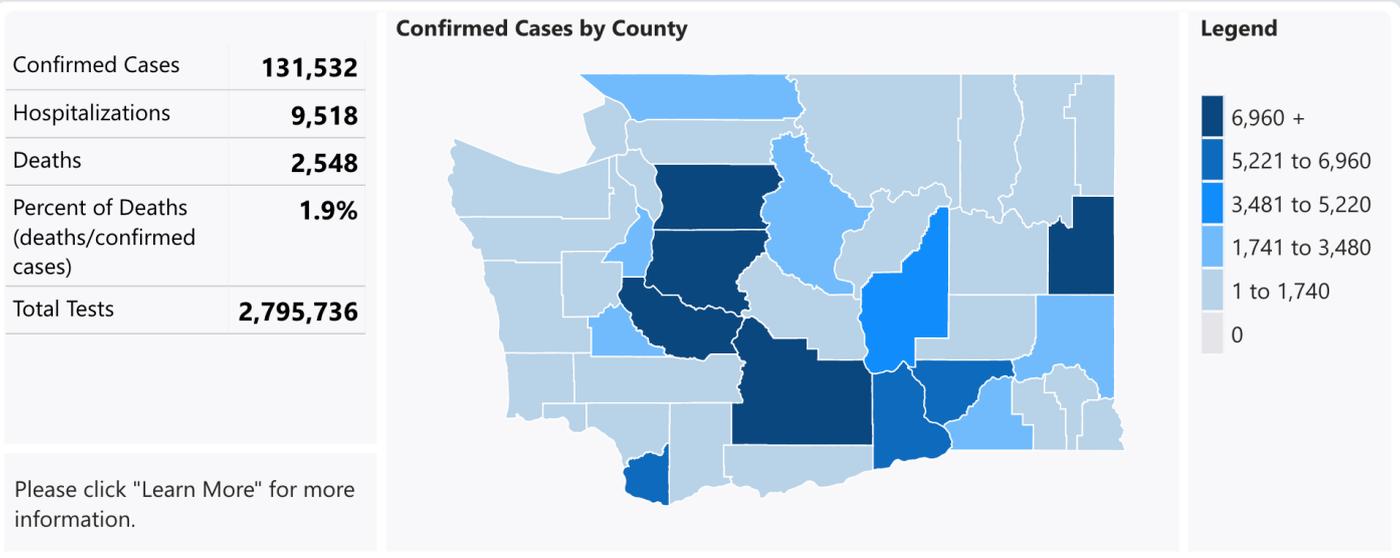
But not all restrictions are equally smart. Jay Inslee, the ~~Grinch~~ Governor of Washington, just announced [sweeping new restrictions](#) [2] that essentially put the entire state back into lockdown at least through mid-December. That alone is poor policy, since conditions vary drastically from one county (or city) to the next.

COVID-19 in Washington State

Confirmed Cases, Hospitalizations and Deaths by County

COVID-19 has spread throughout most of Washington State. Confirmed cases, hospitalizations and deaths happened to people who have had a positive molecular test for COVID-19.

[Learn More](#)



Source [3]: Washington State Department of Health

Consider tiny little Wahkiakum County in the southwest corner of the state. It has a population of roughly 4,500 people. There have been a total of 11 cases, 0 hospitalizations, and 0 deaths. Why should this county be subjected to the same restrictions as King County, where Seattle is located? A one-size-fits-all policy doesn't make sense and is certainly not "based on the science" as the Grinch Governor likes to pretend. Decisions like these should be made as locally as possible.

Another policy that is fabricated out of thin air is restricting businesses like grocery stores and hair salons to 25% capacity. Why 25% instead of 10% or 30% or 50%? There is no scientific data to justify this. Similarly, why should indoor service at coffee shops be banned? Unlike bars, people sit and chat quietly. If everyone is wearing a mask, the risk of transmission is minimal.

How the Governor Stole Thanksgiving

By far, the most obnoxious restriction is on what you can do inside your own home. According to the [Seattle Times](#) [4]:

Indoor gatherings outside one's household are prohibited, unless:

- *participants quarantine for 14 days prior to the gathering, or*
- *quarantine for seven days and receive a negative COVID-19 test within two days of the planned gathering.*

So that means Thanksgiving is canceled because nobody is going to do either of those. It also likely means that the only people who will obey the policy are those who planned on not having a big celebration anyway. Because it's unenforceable, the majority of others who did have big plans probably will proceed with them, while simultaneously scoffing at Mr. Inslee's half-baked idea.

Does this matter? Yes. A government's authority rests in part on the collective respect of its

citizens. That's why policies must be sensible and not arbitrary. Telling people that they cannot celebrate one of America's biggest holidays with their friends and extended families is culturally obtuse and, frankly, idiotic. It would have been far better for the Governor to recommend that those hosting large get-togethers think twice before inviting over elderly people or those with underlying health conditions. That's a sensible policy that people probably would respect.

But Washington State is notoriously allergic to smart policies, let alone ones "based on the science." So, that's how we ended up with a policy that cancels Thanksgiving. Is Christmas next?

Let's hope the governor's heart grows three sizes before then.

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Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2020/11/16/how-washington-governor-jay-inslee-stole-thanksgiving-christmas-next-15157>

Links

[1] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jay_Inslee#/media/File:Jay_Inslee_presidential_announcement_-_March_1,_2019_-_01_\(cropped\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jay_Inslee#/media/File:Jay_Inslee_presidential_announcement_-_March_1,_2019_-_01_(cropped).jpg)

[2] <https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/how-new-restrictions-differ-from-phase-1-washington/293-60c2d5e6-92b9-4f88-b159-3c00e18a80ba>

[3] <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19/DataDashboard>

[4] <https://www.seattletimes.com/life/what-you-can-and-cant-do-following-washingtons-newest-november-coronavirus-lockdown-restrictions/>