

# Biden Says Vaccine Mandates Are the Only Way to Defeat COVID

President Biden on Thursday appealed to private companies to mandate coronavirus vaccinations for employees, asking them to take initiative as an effort that he announced last month to require 80 million American workers to get the shot undergoes a lengthy rule-making process and may not go into effect for weeks.

The president, delivering remarks at a construction site outside Chicago, said that encouraging Americans to get vaccinated had helped, but it had not gone far enough to address the pandemic.

“Even after all of these efforts, we still have more than a quarter of the people in the United States who are eligible for vaccinations but didn’t get the shot,” Mr. Biden said. “That’s why I’ve had to move toward requirements.”

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He said mandates had not been his first instinct, but the requirements were “already proving that they work.”

Mr. Biden said in September that he would use the full force of his presidency to push some 80 million American workers to be vaccinated against the coronavirus, reaching into the private sector to mandate that all companies with more than 100 workers require vaccination or weekly testing. He ordered the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to draft a new rule that would make those requirements enforceable, a process that White House officials said at the time would take at least three or four weeks.

The president said on Thursday that the rule would be put in place quickly, but officials familiar with the process said it was likely to take several more weeks.

In the meantime, Mr. Biden sought to shift responsibility toward companies, which he said would help lead the United States out of the pandemic: “Businesses have more power than ever before to change the arc of this pandemic and save lives.”

Mr. Biden chose to visit the Chicago area in part because it is the home of United

Airlines, one of the first major carriers to require shots for its 67,000 U.S. employees. Other airlines have followed with similar requirements, including American Airlines, Southwest, JetBlue and Alaska Airlines. The president spoke at a site controlled by Clayco, a construction company that has required vaccines and testing for its employees.

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