

# Ron DeSantis Says Biden's Vaccine Mandates Will 'Plunge People Into Destitution'

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis said Friday that President Joe Biden's vaccine mandates will "plunge people into destitution."

The Republican governor vowed at a news conference to continue fighting any federal requirements for workers to get inoculated against the coronavirus, saying he believes individual employees should be "protected."

"Just think of Biden. He says, 'Don't make the vaccines divisive.' Don't make the vaccines divisive? You are trying to take people's jobs away over this issue," the governor said. "You are trying to plunge people into destitution. You are taking away their livelihoods. No one else is doing that. You are the one being divisive about this."

DeSantis has said he will sue the Biden administration if it enacts a proposal to mandate private businesses to require workers to get vaccinated or undergo weekly coronavirus testing. The mandate would apply to private sector businesses with 100 employees or more.

Biden announced his plan in September but left its implementation up to Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The administration submitted its proposal to the Office of Management and Budget earlier this week.

"Every day, we see more businesses implementing vaccination requirements, and the mounting data shows that they work," Biden said in a Thursday speech. "Businesses and organizations that are implementing requirements are seeing their vaccination rates rise by an average of 20 percent or more to well over 90 percent. Let's be clear: Vaccination requirements should not be another issue that divides us."

The White House has already required all federal workers and contractors to get vaccinated, prompting several major airlines—including American, Southwest and United—to implement such requirements for their staff.

The administration said earlier this week it believes any mandate will withstand legal challenges following Texas Governor Greg Abbott's decision to sign an executive order banning vaccine mandates in the Lone Star State.

On Tuesday, press secretary Jen Psaki criticized DeSantis and Abbott for their opposition, saying their position is "out of step" with other leaders and only about "politics."

"Every leader should be focused on supporting efforts to save lives," she told reporters.

Newsweek reached out to the White House for comment on DeSantis' remarks but didn't receive a response before publication.

DeSantis has been consistently pushing back against COVID-19 requirements during the pandemic, including school mask mandates or vaccine requirements for consumers and businesses.

Ahead of the academic year, DeSantis signed an executive order making face masks optional across the state in schools and leaving it up to parents. His administration has withheld funding from school districts that put such mandates in place.

The Biden administration has also gotten into that issue, providing more than \$500,000 in financial assistance to school administrators.

Earlier this week, the Florida Department of Health issued a \$3.57 million fine against one county after it fired 14 employees who refused to get vaccinated against the virus.

"It is unacceptable that Leon County violated Florida law, infringed on current and former employees' medical privacy, and fired loyal public servants because of their personal health decisions," DeSantis said in a statement.

Leon County Administrator Vincent Long said the county doesn't believe it violated the law.

"There is a genuine disagreement about the applicability of the statute and rule, and the County will enforce its rights using any remedies available at law, if necessary," he said in a statement.

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