# Vax Mandate DA

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#### Mandates boost overall vaccination rates – skeptics eventually get vaxxed

**Jones 9/29** [(Ja'han Jones is The ReidOut Blog writer. He's a futurist and multimedia producer focused on culture and politics. His previous projects include "Black Hair Defined" and the "Black Obituary Project.") “Turns out, COVID vaccine mandates work. Good thing more are on the way.” MSNBC. September 29, 2021.] AW

As it turns out, many people who previously refused the Covid-19 vaccines are discovering that they will have to pay a great deal if they want to remain [unvaccinated](https://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow/watch/non-covid-patients-receiving-reduced-care-at-hospitals-overwhelmed-by-the-unvaccinated-121764421871).

I don’t hate to say, “I told you so,” so I’ll say it: [I told you so](https://www.msnbc.com/the-reidout/anti-vaxxers-will-have-pay-if-they-want-reject-public-n1279331).

The Food and Drug Administration’s approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in August effectively paved the way for vaccination requirements across the U.S. Turns out those mandates boosted the overall vaccination rate among some groups of workers, including teachers and health care professionals.

The number of vaccination mandates is growing. Given the choice between joblessness and getting a potentially lifesaving vaccine shot, many people are choosing the latter — even if begrudgingly.

After a vaccination mandate went into effect for health care workers in New York on Monday, the state reported that 92 percent of all its hospital and nursing home employees have gotten at least one shot — that’s a roughly 10 percentage-point increase among both groups.

And never fret, America’s private industry workers. If you clock in for a nongovernmental entity, it’s highly likely that your job imposes a vaccination mandate, as well. The mandates are taking hold beyond the world of health.

After United Airlines instituted a vaccination deadline of this Monday for its employees, CEO Scott Kirby said this week that 98.5 percent of its roughly 67,000 employees have been vaccinated.

Some states — including [Maine](https://www.maine.gov/covid19/vaccines/public-faq/health-care-worker-vaccination), [Rhode Island](https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/courts/2021/09/28/judge-rejects-firefighters-unions-attempt-block-ri-vaccine-mandate/5899006001/)and [Washington](https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/505-160-VaccinationRequirementFAQs.pdf) — will require vaccinations for health care workers beginning next month. Others — like [Oregon](https://www.oregon.gov/boli/workers/Pages/covid-vaccine.aspx#:~:text=On%20August%2010%2C%202021%2C%20Governor,also%20employed%20by%20the%20state.) and [Colorado](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EXWVy-Zsn9YEm272lyLR-cBpb_NotNXi/view) — will implement mandates for health care professionals later next month.

On Monday, a federal judge ruled that the New York City school district — the country’s largest — [can require its employees to get vaccinated](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/education/new-york-city-vaccine-mandate-school-employees-can-be-imposed-n1280207).  On Wednesday, the San Diego Unified School District — California’s second-largest school district — [announced](https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/san-diego-unified-school-district-vaccine-mandate/2729909/) a requirement that all eligible students and staff be vaccinated by December.

On Sept. 9, President Joe Biden [said](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/biden-announce-additional-vaccine-mandates-he-unveils-new-covid-strategy-n1278735) the government will require that all federal employees and contractors be vaccinated and that all private employers with 100 or more employees must require either vaccinations or weekly testing.

#### Covid-19 mandates are legal and ethical – but current labor laws are the only barrier preventing widespread strikes

**Millhiser 7/30** [(Ian Millhiser is a senior correspondent at Vox, where he focuses on the Supreme Court, the Constitution, and the decline of liberal democracy in the United States. Before joining Vox, Ian was a columnist at ThinkProgress. Among other things, he clerked for Judge Eric L. Clay of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and served as a Teach for America corps member in the Mississippi Delta. He received a B.A. in philosophy from Kenyon College and a J.D., magna cum laude, from Duke University, where he served as senior note editor on the Duke Law Journal and was elected to the Order of the Coif. He is the author of Injustices: The Supreme Court's History of Comforting the Comfortable and Afflicting the Afflicted.) “Yes, Covid-19 Mandates are Legal” Vox. July 30, 2021.] AW

In 1902, the city of Cambridge, Massachusetts, faced a smallpox outbreak. In response, the local health board ordered the city’s residents over the age of 21 to be vaccinated against this disease. Violators faced a $5 fine.

After a local pastor was fined for violating this vaccine mandate, he appealed his case all the way to the Supreme Court. The Court told him to pound sand in [Jacobson v. Massachusetts](https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/197/11) (1905).

“The liberty secured by the Constitution of the United States to every person within its jurisdiction does not import an absolute right in each person to be, at all times and in all circumstances, wholly freed from restraint,” Justice John Marshall Harlan wrote for the Court. He added that “there are manifold restraints to which every person is necessarily subject for the common good.”

Under Jacobson, state and local governments — though not necessarily the federal government — may mandate vaccines for nearly all of their residents.

That decision has obvious relevance today. We now have multiple vaccines against Covid-19 that are both safe and shockingly effective, and they are available for free for all Americans. Yet the pandemic continues to rage in the United States because a large minority of Americans have yet to get a shot. While some people may [face legitimate obstacles](https://www.vox.com/22587443/covid-19-vaccine-refusal-hesitancy-variant-delta-cases-rate), others are [just obstinate](https://www.vox.com/2021/7/28/22594637/vaccine-mandates-covid-19-masks-delta-variants). Policymakers and other leaders, in other words, may need to take a page from Cambridge’s early 20th-century health board.

Some already are. Many of the first mandates are from employers: The state of New York, for example, recently announced that all of its employees will have to either [get vaccinated or submit to weekly coronavirus testing](https://twitter.com/GormleyAlbany/status/1420414312997392386?s=20), and President Joe Biden plans to [impose similar requirements on federal employees](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/28/us/politics/biden-federal-workers-vaccination.html).

Many private employers also require vaccines — Google, for example, will [insist that its employees be vaccinated](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/28/business/google-return-to-office-masks.html) in order to enter the company’s offices. More than [600 colleges and universities](https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/live-coronavirus-updates/heres-a-list-of-colleges-that-will-require-students-to-be-vaccinated-against-covid-19) require at least some of their students, faculty, and staff to be vaccinated.

These sorts of mandates will undoubtedly trigger lawsuits from vaccine resisters. In some cases, individuals with religious objections to vaccines or people with disabilities that preclude them from being vaccinated will have strong legal claims — much like schoolchildren who [can already seek exemptions](https://www.ncsl.org/research/health/school-immunization-exemption-state-laws.aspx) from schools’ vaccination requirements if they have religious objections.

But, assuming that the courts follow existing law — and assuming that Republican state governments [do not enact new laws](https://www.govtech.com/health/florida-gov-desantis-signs-bill-banning-vaccine-passports) prohibiting employers from disciplining workers who refuse to be vaccinated — most challenges to employer-imposed vaccination requirements should fail.

Under Jacobson, moreover, states should be free to order everyone within their borders to be vaccinated against Covid-19, although it’s [far from clear whether the federal government could do the same](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/11pdf/11-393c3a2.pdf).

Of course, there is no guarantee that the Roberts Court, which is [eager to impose limits on public health officials](https://www.vox.com/2021/7/27/22594374/courts-covid-delta-pandemic-supreme-court-brett-kavanaugh-public-health-destroy) and [not especially bothered about overruling precedents](https://www.vox.com/22575435/voting-rights-supreme-court-john-roberts-shelby-county-constitution-brnovich-elena-kagan), will follow Jacobson if a state does enact a vaccine mandate. But there is good reason to believe that it will. Even Justice Neil Gorsuch, one of the most conservative members of the current Court, recently [described Jacobson as a “modest” decision](https://scholar.google.com/scholar_case?case=14249141472030529264&hl=en&as_sdt=6&as_vis=1&oi=scholarr) that “didn’t seek to depart from normal legal rules during a pandemic.”

The bottom line, in other words, is that, under existing law, numerous institutions within the United States may require their employees — and, in some cases, their citizens — to be vaccinated against Covid-19.

Your boss probably can require you to get vaccinated

Employment relationships in the United States are typically “[at-will](https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/at-will-employment-states),” meaning that an employee can be fired at any time and for any reason, even if that reason is completely arbitrary. If you have an at-will relationship with your employer, your boss can fire you because they don’t like your haircut. Or because they don’t like what you had for breakfast last Tuesday.

Or, for that matter, because you refuse to get a Covid-19 vaccine.

The general rule, in other words, is that your employer can fire you for any reason unless some outside legal force — a federal or state law, or maybe an individual or collective bargaining contract between you and your employer — intervenes to give you additional job security. And there is no federal law prohibiting employers from requiring nearly all of their employees to get vaccinated.

#### Vaccine mandates guarantee strikes – that kills the work force

**Koenig 11/4** [(David Koenig of the Associated Press contributed to this report and is a contributor to K5 News) “Vaccine mandate rules affecting 84 million Americans finalized” K5 News. November 4, 2021] AW

WASHINGTON — Tens of millions of Americans who work at [companies with 100 or more employees](https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/vaccine/biden-employer-vaccine-testing-mandate-covid/507-27e042a1-53ef-4bb4-8e6c-35f9d3c0e302) will need to be vaccinated against COVID-19 by Jan. 4 or get tested for the virus weekly under [government rules that took effect Thursday](https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus/ets2).

The new requirements are the Biden administration’s boldest move yet to persuade reluctant Americans to finally get a vaccine that has been widely available for months -- or potentially face financial consequences. If successful, administration officials believe it will go a long way toward ending a pandemic that has killed more than 750,000 Americans.

First previewed by President Joe Biden in September, the requirements will apply to about 84 million workers at medium and large businesses, although it is not clear how many of those employees are unvaccinated.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations will force the companies to require that unvaccinated workers test negative for COVID-19 at least once a week and wear a mask while in the workplace.

OSHA left open the possibility of expanding the requirement to smaller businesses. It asked for public comment on whether employers with fewer than 100 employees could handle vaccination or testing programs.

Tougher rules will apply to another 17 million people who work in nursing homes, hospitals and other facilities that receive money from Medicare and Medicaid. Those workers will not have an option for testing — they will need to be vaccinated.

Workers will be able to ask for exemptions on medical or religious grounds.

The requirements will not apply to people who work at home or outdoors.

Biden framed the issue as a simple choice between getting more people vaccinated or prolonging the pandemic.

“While I would have much preferred that requirements not become necessary, too many people remain unvaccinated for us to get out of this pandemic for good,” he said Thursday in a statement.

Biden said his encouragement for businesses to impose mandates and his own previous requirements for the military and federal contractors have helped reduce the number of unvaccinated Americans over 12 from 100 million in late July to about 60 million now.

Those measures, he said, have not led to mass firings or worker shortages, adding that vaccines have been required before to fight other diseases.

OSHA said companies that fail to comply with the regulations could face penalties of nearly $14,000 per violation.

The agency will face enforcement challenges. Even counting help from states, OSHA has [only 1,850 inspectors](https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-business-health-coronavirus-pandemic-henry-mcmaster-f33acd986ad5045e48088a832c6f9903) to oversee 130 million workers at 8 million workplaces. An administration official said the agency will respond to whistleblower complaints and make limited spot checks.

The release of the rules followed weeks of regulatory review and meetings with business groups, labor unions and others.

OSHA drafted the rules under emergency authority meant to protect workers from an imminent health hazard. The agency estimated that the vaccine mandate will save more than 6,500 worker lives and prevent more than 250,000 hospitalizations over the next six months.

The rules set up potential legal battles along partisan lines between states and the federal government. Several states and Republican governors threatened to sue, contending that the administration lacks the power to make such sweeping mandates under emergency authority.

OSHA's parent agency, the Labor Department, says it is on sound legal footing. The department's top legal official, Seema Nanda, said OSHA rules preempt conflicting state laws or orders, including those that bar employers from requiring vaccinations, testing or face masks.

Senate Republicans immediately launched a petition to force a vote to overturn the vaccine mandate, but with Democrats controlling the chamber, the effort is nearly certain to fail.

The [rules](https://public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2021-23643.pdf) will require workers to receive either two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine by Jan. 4 or be tested weekly. Employees who test positive must be removed from the workplace.

Companies won't be required to provide or pay for tests for unvaccinated workers, but they must give paid time off for employees to get the shots and sick leave to recover from side effects that prevent them from working. The requirements for masks and paid time off for shots take effect Dec. 5.

Employers covered by the requirements must verify their workers’ vaccination status by checking documents such as CDC vaccination cards or records from doctors or pharmacies.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services issued a separate rule requiring vaccination for workers in 76,000 health facilities and home health care providers that get funding from the government health programs. A senior administration official said that several large private health care organizations imposed their own mandates and achieved high vaccination rates — 96% or higher — without widespread resignations.

A previously announced requirement for federal contractors to make sure workers are vaccinated was scheduled to take effect Dec. 8, but on Thursday the administration delayed that measure until Jan. 4 to match the requirements on other large employers and health care providers. Already more than a dozen states have sued to block the mandate on contractors.

For weeks, Biden has [encouraged businesses not to wait](https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-joe-biden-business-health-6e758dc5e24320677e48f58cbfca37bf)for OSHA to act. He has touted businesses that announced their own vaccine requirements and urged other companies to follow their lead.

Administration officials say those efforts are paying off, with about 70% of the nation's adults now fully vaccinated.

Walmart, the nation’s largest private employer, said in late July it was requiring all workers at its headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas, and managers who travel within the United States to be vaccinated by Oct. 4. The retailer stopped short of requiring shots for frontline workers, however.

United Airlines required 67,000 U.S. employees to get vaccinated or face termination. Only a couple hundred refused to do so, although about 2,000 are seeking exemptions.

In August, Tyson Foods told its 120,000 U.S. workers that they must be vaccinated by Nov. 1. On Thursday, the company said more than 96% of its workforce was vaccinated, including 60,500 people who got their shots after the August announcement.

However, some companies have expressed fear that some vaccine-hesitant workers might quit, leaving their workforces even thinner in an already-tight labor market.

Several corporate groups, including the Business Roundtable, endorsed the mandate. However, retail groups worried the requirement could disrupt their operations during the critical Christmas shopping period. Retailers and others also said it could worsen supply chain disruptions.

The National Retail Federation suggested the new rules are not needed because the rolling average number of new daily cases in the U.S. has fallen by more than half since September.

“Nevertheless, the Biden administration has chosen to declare an ‘emergency’ and impose burdensome new requirements on retailers during the crucial holiday shopping season,” said David French, a senior vice president for the trade group.

The number of new infections in the U.S. is still falling from a summer surge caused by the highly contagious delta variant, but the rate of decline has slowed in recent weeks. The 7-day moving average is down 6% from two weeks ago, at more than 76,000 new cases and 1,200 deaths per day.

The earlier mandate on federal contractors led to demonstrations by opponents, including workers at a NASA rocket engine test site in Mississippi. Some said they are immune because they contracted COVID-19. Others said vaccines violated their religious beliefs and constitutional rights.

“No one should be forced to take a medical treatment just to keep their job,” said Nyla Trumbach, an engineer at the site. “There’s years and years of experience and skill out here, and I just want anyone who’s watching to see what we stand to lose here if these people don’t keep their jobs.”

#### Declining workforce decimates the economy

**Isidore 8/20** (Chris Isidore is a senior writer for CNN Business, where he covers the auto industry, airlines, labor and all other manner of breaking financial news. Over the last 30 years, he has covered most major US bankruptcies, including GM, Chrysler, Lehman Brothers, most US airlines and Sears, as well as the city of Detroit.) “Vaccine mandates at work meet their toughest opponent: America’s labor shortage” August 20, 2021.] AW

At Kevin Smith's home health care agency in Massachusetts, only 52% of his 400 staff members have been vaccinated. He'd like to order them all to get the shot, but he says he can't risk a mass exodus.

It's a legitimate fear. The labor market is very tight, with a [record number of job openings](http://www.cnn.com/2021/08/09/economy/record-job-openings-june/index.html) and not enough job candidates. And among unvaccinated workers asked what they would do if their employer instituted a mandate, 50% said they'd leave their job, according to a June survey by health policy think tank KFF.

"It puts you at risk of alienating the staff, if not losing them to a competitor," said Smith, who has run the family-owned Best of Care since 2013. "No one can afford to do that. That is why any employer in our industry is so reluctant to impose a mandate."

The meeting of the labor market challenge and public health crisis puts employers in a tough spot: The worker shortage means employer mandates are not likely to be the answer to raising the nation's vaccination rate. But a higher inoculation rate is exactly what experts say we need to end the pandemic.

Difficulty finding workers

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has given guidance to employers that they have the right to impose a vaccine mandate as long as there are exceptions for employees with health conditions that pose a risk or legitimate religious objections.

Yet "employers in a labor shortage environment don't want to create any barrier for employment, let alone any cause for people to go elsewhere," said Julia Pollak, chief economist for job site Ziprecruiter.

It's not clear how many employers are taking that step. A June survey from the Society of Human Resource Management showed 29% of workers say their employers are requiring vaccines. A Gartner survey from the end of July found only 9% doing so.

Even among hospitals, most employers don't have vaccine mandates: The American Hospital Association said only 2,100 hospitals, about a third of the nation's total, require vaccines. And many are in places where state laws or executive orders mandate them.

Brian Kropp, chief of research at consulting firm Gartner's HR practice, says he believes that figure will remain a minority -— even as household-name companies have begun implementing [mandates](https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/28/business/companies-vaccine-mandate/index.html) in response to the Delta variant surge of Covid cases.

They're most common at major tech companies such as Google ([GOOG](https://money.cnn.com/quote/quote.html?symb=GOOG&source=story_quote_link)) and Facebook ([FB](https://money.cnn.com/quote/quote.html?symb=FB&source=story_quote_link)), or Wall Street banks such as Goldman Sachs ([GS](https://money.cnn.com/quote/quote.html?symb=GS&source=story_quote_link)) and Morgan Stanley ([MS](https://money.cnn.com/quote/quote.html?symb=MS&source=story_quote_link)). But there's a critical difference here: These employers offer high-paying jobs, benefits and other advantages that inspire workers to stick around.

For the many small businesses and other employers who depend on hourly workers to fill most positions, there's greater fear about losing vaccine-hesitant employees and not being able to find vaccinated workers to replace them.

"If you run a restaurant or a store and you have employees who are vaccine-hesitant, they are going to quit and go to the store or restaurant next door," said Kropp. "It's a whole lot easier for people to switch jobs, particularly in today's labor market."

Even some employers with stable workforces are reluctant to impose a vaccine mandate. While United Airlines ([UAL](https://money.cnn.com/quote/quote.html?symb=UAL&source=story_quote_link)) recent [ordered all US employees](http://www.cnn.com/2021/08/06/business/united-airlines-vaccine-mandate/index.html) to be vaccinated, rivals American ([AAL](https://money.cnn.com/quote/quote.html?symb=AAL&source=story_quote_link)), Delta ([DAL](https://money.cnn.com/quote/quote.html?symb=DAL&source=story_quote_link)) and Southwest ([LUV](https://money.cnn.com/quote/quote.html?symb=LUV&source=story_quote_link)) [have yet to do so](https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/three-us-airlines-no-vaccine-mandate-workers/index.html).

'Divisive' moral arguments and partial rules

Further complicating matters is opposition to mandates, even from employees who have gotten vaccinated themselves. The KFF survey in June found that even among those who are vaccinated, 42% said they don't want it mandated by their employer, while only 43% want a vaccine required.

"In general we find that vaccine mandates are very divisive," said Liz Hamel, vice president and director of public opinion and survey research at KFF. "There's a sense that getting a vaccine is personal choice."

Attitudes may be changing with the recent surge in cases, however: [Recent polls](http://www.cnn.com/2021/08/18/politics/workplace-vaccine-mandate-poll/index.html) conducted by Axios/Ipos and Gallup found a slight majority of Americans favoring employer vaccine mandates. That compares to KFF's June survey that found only 28% wanted an employer mandate and 61% opposed the idea.

Seven states — Arizona, Arkansas, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota and Tennessee — have passed laws banning vaccine mandates for at least some employers, according to the National Academy for State Health Policy. Similar legislation has been introduced in 39 other states, all but Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada and West Virginia.

Another complex issue is differing rules for white-collar vs. blue-collar employees. Major employers including Walmart ([WMT](https://money.cnn.com/quote/quote.html?symb=WMT&source=story_quote_link)) and UPS ([UPS](https://money.cnn.com/quote/quote.html?symb=UPS&source=story_quote_link)) are requiring vaccines for corporate office staff, but not for those on the front lines, working in stores or driving trucks.

Neither company would comment on whether the labor crunch for hourly workers is the driving force of the different rules.

"Those office environments are very different than our operating facilities, which have been safely staffed in-person since the beginning and throughout the pandemic," said a statement from UPS.

Some employers are following the lead of President Joe Biden's [order for federal workers](https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/29/politics/joe-biden-vaccination-requirement-announcement/index.html), giving them the choice of vaccination or the more stringent testing and masking, said Amber Clayton, director of SHRM's HR Knowledge Center.

"That's probably what we'll see more of than full vaccine mandates," she said.

A plea to government leaders

Smith, the CEO of the home health care agency in Massachusetts, wants more than just a model from the government: He would prefer a mandate at the state or federal level to require everyone in his industry to get vaccinated. It would level the playing field among all employers in the sector, he explained, and would help protect the health of his employees and clients.

"From a pure safety standpoint, it would make me feel better if it were required," he said. "And it would take the pressure off me."

Smith's wish is hardly unique, Kropp said.

Many other employers are worried unvaccinated workers could spread the virus even to inoculated coworkers and cause high absenteeism. And some workers, especially those with young children at home or other vulnerable family members, won't want to return to the office unless they know everyone else is vaccinated, he said.

"What almost every employer wants is either the governors or some other government body to say vaccines are required," Kropp said. "Then they get what they want, and they don't get any of the blame or frustration."

**Economic decline causes global nuclear war**

**Tønnesson 15** [(Stein, Research Professor, Peace Research Institute Oslo; Leader of East Asia Peace program, Uppsala University) “Deterrence, interdependence and Sino–US peace,” International Area Studies Review, Vol. 18, No. 3, p. 297-311, 2015] SJDI

Several **recent works** on China and Sino–US relations **have made** substantial **contributions to the current understanding of how and under what circumstances** a combination of **nuclear deterrence and economic interdependence may reduce the risk of war between major powers**. At least four conclusions can be drawn from the review above: first, those who say that **interdependence may both inhibit and drive conflict** are right. Interdependence raises the cost of conflict for all sides **but** **asymmetrical or unbalanced dependencies and** negative trade expectations may **generate tensions leading to trade wars among inter-dependent states that** in turn **increase the risk of military conflict** (Copeland, 2015: 1, 14, 437; Roach, 2014). The risk may increase if one of the interdependent countries is governed by an inward-looking socio-economic coalition (Solingen, 2015); second, the risk of war between China and the US should not just be analysed bilaterally but include their allies and partners. Third party countries could drag China or the US into confrontation; third, in this context it is of some comfort that the three main economic powers in Northeast Asia (China, Japan and South Korea) are all deeply integrated economically through production networks within a global system of trade and finance (Ravenhill, 2014; Yoshimatsu, 2014: 576); and fourth, **decisions for war** and peace **are taken by very few people, who act on the basis of their future expectations**. International relations theory must be supplemented by foreign policy analysis in order to assess the value attributed by national decision-makers to economic development and their assessments of risks and opportunities. **If leaders** on either side of the Atlantic **begin to seriously** fear or anticipate their own nation’sdecline then they **may blame** this on **external dependence, appeal to anti-foreign sentiments, contemplate the use of force to gain** respect or **credibility, adopt protectionist policies, and** ultimately refuse to be deterred by either nuclear arms **or prospects of socioeconomic calamities. Such a dangerous shift could happen** abruptly, i.e. under the instigation of actions by a third party – or against a third party.

Yet as long as there is both nuclear deterrence and interdependence, the tensions **in East Asia** are unlikely to escalate to war. As Chan (2013) says, all states in the region are aware that they cannot count on support from either China or the US if they make provocative moves. The greatest risk is not that a territorial dispute leads to war under present circumstances but that changes in the world economy alter those circumstances in ways that render inter-state peace more **precarious**. If China and the US fail to rebalance their financial and trading relations (Roach, 2014) then a trade war could result, interrupting transnational production networks, provoking social distress, and exacerbating nationalist emotions. **This could have unforeseen consequences in the field of security, with nuclear deterrence remaining the only factor to protect the world from Armageddon, and unreliably so**. **Deterrence could lose its credibility**: one of the two **great powers might gamble that the other yield in a cyber-war or conventional** limited **war**, or third party countries might engage in conflict with each other, with a view to obliging Washington or Beijing to intervene.

#### Nuclear war causes extinction – famine and climate change

Starr 15 [(Steven, Director of the University of Missouri’s Clinical Laboratory Science Program and a senior scientist at the Physicians for Social Responsibility) “Nuclear War, Nuclear Winter, and Human Extinction,” Federation of American Scientists, 10/14/2015] DD  
While it is impossible to precisely predict all the human impacts that would result from a nuclear winter, it is relatively simple to predict those which would be most profound. That is, a nuclear winter would cause most humans and large animals to die from nuclear famine in a mass extinction event similar to the one that wiped out the dinosaurs.

Following the detonation (in conflict) of US and/or Russian launch-ready strategic nuclear weapons, nuclear firestorms would burn simultaneously over a total land surface area of many thousands or tens of thousands of square miles. These mass fires, many of which would rage over large cities and industrial areas, would release many tens of millions of tons of black carbon soot and smoke (up to 180 million tons, according to peer-reviewed studies), which would rise rapidly above cloud level and into the stratosphere. [For an explanation of the calculation of smoke emissions, see Atmospheric effects & societal consequences of regional scale nuclear conflicts.]

The scientists who completed the most recent peer-reviewed studies on nuclear winter discovered that the sunlight would heat the smoke, producing a self-lofting effect that would not only aid the rise of the smoke into the stratosphere (above cloud level, where it could not be rained out), but act to keep the smoke in the stratosphere for 10 years or more. The longevity of the smoke layer would act to greatly increase the severity of its effects upon the biosphere.

Once in the stratosphere, the smoke (predicted to be produced by a range of strategic nuclear wars) would rapidly engulf the Earth and form a dense stratospheric smoke layer. The smoke from a war fought with strategic nuclear weapons would quickly prevent up to 70% of sunlight from reaching the surface of the Northern Hemisphere and 35% of sunlight from reaching the surface of the Southern Hemisphere. Such an enormous loss of warming sunlight would produce Ice Age weather conditions on Earth in a matter of weeks. For a period of 1-3 years following the war, temperatures would fall below freezing every day in the central agricultural zones of North America and Eurasia. [For an explanation of nuclear winter, see Nuclear winter revisited with a modern climate model and current nuclear arsenals: Still catastrophic consequences.]

Nuclear winter would cause average global surface temperatures to become colder than they were at the height of the last Ice Age. Such extreme cold would eliminate growing seasons for many years, probably for a decade or longer. Can you imagine a winter that lasts for ten years?

The results of such a scenario are obvious. Temperatures would be much too cold to grow food, and they would remain this way long enough to cause most humans and animals to starve to death.

Global nuclear famine would ensue in a setting in which the infrastructure of the combatant nations has been totally destroyed, resulting in massive amounts of chemical and radioactive toxins being released into the biosphere. We don’t need a sophisticated study to tell us that no food and Ice Age temperatures for a decade would kill most people and animals on the planet.  Would the few remaining survivors be able to survive in a radioactive, toxic environment?

## Democracy

#### Alt causes to democracy decline – discrimination, special interests and partisan polarization.

**Freedom House 3/22** [(Freedom House is a news organization founded on the core conviction that freedom flourishes in democratic nations where governments are accountable to their people. It focuses extensively on geopolitical relations and how they impact freedom and democracy from nations around the globe) “US Democracy Has Declined Significantly in the Past Decade, Reforms Urgently Needed” Freedom House. March 22, 2021.] AW

Today, Freedom House released a special report, From Crisis to Reform: A Call to Strengthen America’s Battered Democracy, which identifies three enduring problems that have undermined the health of the US political system: unequal treatment for people of color, the outsized influence of special interests in politics, and partisan polarization. This report comes in response to a decade-long decline in US democracy and is based in Freedom House’s global comparative research.

The report concludes that these three major problems compound one another, creating a vicious circle of distrust and dysfunction, and that addressing them with urgency and conviction is crucial to restoring Americans’ faith not just in their government, but also in democracy itself.

“Our democracy is in trouble,” said Michael J. Abramowitz, president of Freedom House, “and the strength of American democracy is important for people everywhere, not just here at home. Congress and the Biden administration must make it a priority to strengthen our institutions, restore civic norms, and uphold the promise of universal liberty on which our nation was founded.”

“The state of US democracy has implications for freedom and democracy around the world,” said Sarah Repucci, vice president of research and analysis at Freedom House. “Democracy movements in other countries look to the United States for inspiration and support, and authoritarian leaders falsely point to America’s problems as proof of democracy’s inherent inferiority and as a sort of license for their own abuses of power.”

Key drivers of long-term decline

Unequal treatment for people of color

As a nation and a society, the United States has struggled to move past the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow. While great strides have been made in terms of formal desegregation and the codification of civil rights, the unequal treatment of people of color in practice remains a great and pressing challenge.

Discrimination in the criminal justice system, from police violence against Black Americans to the disproportionate incarceration of people of color, is especially damaging to US society and Americans’ faith in government.

Special-interest influence in politics

A major cause of public distrust in government is the outsized influence of powerful special interests in politics and policymaking. The 2010 Citizens United ruling, in which the Supreme Court found that the constitution prohibited government restrictions on political advertising by corporations and other legal entities, exacerbated the problem.

The United States is an outlier among its peers with respect to the scale and duration of campaign expenditures and the fundraising efforts required to fuel them. In few similar democracies does private money have such a large impact on the political sphere.

Partisan polarization

Deepening partisan divisions have distorted political and civic discourse, encouraged extremism, and led to governmental dysfunction, often preventing the country from addressing shared problems and advancing the public interest.

Weaknesses in the US electoral system, such as partisan gerrymandering, feed polarization by incentivizing radically partisan positions in primary elections, tying partisan affiliation to demographic traits, and undermining a sense of common national identity.

#### Partisan polarization is a massive alt cause- the US is divided

**Repucci 21** [(Sarah Repucci is the Vice President of Freedom House, a news organization founded on the core conviction that freedom flourishes in democratic nations where governments are accountable to their people. It focuses extensively on geopolitical relations and how they impact freedom and democracy from nations around the globe. She is also head of research and analysis for Freedom House.) “From Crisis to Reform: A Call to Strengthen America’s Battered Democracy”. Freedom House. 2021] AW

American society is increasingly defined by a widening gap between people who identify as either liberal or conservative, or as supporters of the Democratic or Republican Party. These Americans are sorting themselves into more homogeneous groups with similar political leanings and limited opportunity for interaction with those on the other side, which can blind them to the many issues on which large majorities still agree.[19](https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2021/crisis-reform-call-strengthen-americas-battered-democracy#footnote1_wc6jxd7) Political identity is coded into choices as mundane as where someone buys groceries or what television shows they watch. That Americans across the political spectrum use the shorthand of “red” and “blue” to define geographic areas is a testament to the partisan divide.

The specific character of US political polarization is particularly damaging to democracy when compared with other countries. While many democracies feature sharp debate and ideological competition between left and right, partisan affiliation in the United States has also become more closely tied to racial, ethnic, and religious identity. This makes it far more difficult for parties to gain supporters through attraction and persuasion, and far easier for unscrupulous politicians to present their opponents as an inherent and existential threat. Critiquing one’s own camp or supporting a position associated with the rival party can seem like a betrayal, engendering a blind loyalty that ignores abuse of power and corruption by unaccountable leaders. At its ultimate extremes, politics based on immutable identities can lead to the sort of chronic dysfunction and insecurity seen in places like Bosnia and Herzegovina or Lebanon. It undermines the idea of a common national identity, of a community of citizens with shared interests, and hampers progress on even the most practical governance problems.

Another distinction is that US polarization is not tied to a single personality, notwithstanding the recent dominance of Donald Trump among Republicans. The divide began long before Trump ran for president, and it seems likely to persist after he has left the scene. The current political rifts in countries as diverse as Poland and Venezuela can largely be traced to the 1990s, but the United States arguably set out on its modern partisan trajectory in the 1960s and 1970s. The durability of US polarization has meant that it is often passed from parents to children, making it harder to dislodge.[20](https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2021/crisis-reform-call-strengthen-americas-battered-democracy#footnote2_n4zf98j)

America’s first-past-the-post electoral system, in which voters may choose only one candidate and even a candidate with a small plurality can win, has set the stage for polarization by making it difficult for any third party to emerge as a viable alternative to the Democrats and Republicans. The two-party structure is more entrenched than in other established democracies with similar electoral systems, like the United Kingdom or Canada, where third parties hold sizable shares of the legislature.

Members of Congress reconvene in a joint session to ratify President Biden's Electoral College win after being evacuated when rioters stormed the Capitol. (Image credit: Shutterstock)

But it is the practice of partisan gerrymandering that has the most corrosive and radicalizing effect on US politics, generating a multitude of districts in which one party can be virtually certain of victory. Most of the 50 states still allow their elected legislatures to oversee the process of redrawing district boundaries to account for population changes,[21](https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2021/crisis-reform-call-strengthen-americas-battered-democracy#footnote3_bo61a93) meaning lawmakers from the governing party can essentially choose their own voters—an inversion of democracy. The only real competition an incumbent faces in a well-gerrymandered district comes from challengers in the intraparty primary elections, for which voter turnout is often limited to firm party loyalists. This encourages the candidates to take extreme positions and drives political discourse away from the center over time.[22](https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2021/crisis-reform-call-strengthen-americas-battered-democracy#footnote4_i2x2q4f) Gerrymandering has deep roots in the American system, but it has become more sophisticated thanks to strategic and technological advancements in recent decades, and the two parties’ growing affiliation with particular demographic groups has made it possible to predict a given community’s voting patterns with greater precision. Analogous but more distorted forms of gerrymandering and district malapportionment can be found in less democratic countries around the world—including Hungary, Jordan, and Malaysia—where incumbent forces seek to tip the scales against the opposition and maintain a share of legislative seats that exceeds their share of the per capita vote.

The American system puts elected officials in charge not just of district maps, but also of electoral administration, including counting and tabulation. Most countries assign electoral management to independent or politically balanced commissions, but in the United States, the task falls to state-level partisan officeholders who may be on the ballot themselves. This conflict of interest was on prominent display in 2018, when the top election official in Georgia, Republican secretary of state Brian Kemp, won the governor’s seat after using his existing post to amplify unfounded fears of fraud and purge hundreds of thousands of voters from the rolls. In 2020, President Trump called on Republican officials in key states—including Kemp and secretary of state Brad Raffensperger in Georgia—to alter the final vote tallies in his favor, but to their credit, they resisted enormous pressure and refused to do so.

Partisanship and polarization affects even the judiciary in the United States.[23](https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2021/crisis-reform-call-strengthen-americas-battered-democracy#footnote5_yhd7lkp) Unlike magistrates in nearly all of America’s international peer countries, many state-level judges are directly elected by the public, in some cases on partisan tickets. Federal judges are appointed for life and enjoy considerable independence in practice, but nominations by the president and the confirmation process in the Senate have become highly politicized over the years, eroding public confidence in judges’ impartiality.

The combination of increased polarization and the advent of new media platforms has helped to push an avalanche of conspiracy theories, inflammatory views, and disinformation into the political mainstream. Social media have also become conduits for hate speech and intimidation, driving some people out of the digital public square.[24](https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2021/crisis-reform-call-strengthen-americas-battered-democracy#footnote6_i9nu6g3) Despite recent efforts to enhance the transparency and consistency of their content-moderation policies, social media companies’ opaque algorithms continue to support the rapid dissemination of false and harmful narratives online, yet calls for tighter restrictions have triggered alarm about the danger of censorship and favoritism. The decision by major platforms to remove accounts belonging to President Trump and other right-wing figures after the Capitol riot pleased those users’ critics while angering their supporters. Meanwhile, segments of the population have grown more distrustful of traditional news outlets that aspire to objectivity and fact-based journalism, with the majority of Americans now viewing news media as biased.[25](https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2021/crisis-reform-call-strengthen-americas-battered-democracy#footnote7_8tl8h07) This has led consumers toward more partisan options that reinforce their own views; the far-right alternatives have disproportionately spread false or misleading narratives in the United States. The resulting information ecosystem is fraught with unreliable content and divided into exclusive echo chambers, feeding further polarization, and undermining the shared civic discussions that are necessary for the functioning of any democracy.

#### US Democracy is resilient – a surge in populism is not enough to upset the balance

**Drezner 20** [(Daniel W. Drezner is a professor of international politics at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University and a regular contributor.) “The resiliency of American Democracy” The Washington Post. February 4, 2020.] AW

On Monday, the hard-working staff here at Spoiler Alerts [sounded pretty gloomy](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/02/03/real-world-political-science/?itid=lk_inline_manual_2) about the state of American civic life., As it turns out, elected officials are behaving exactly as political scientists predicted they would behave, focusing like a laser beam on staying in power. This has led Republicans to demonstrate slavish devotion to the president and congressional Republicans in particular to show amazing deference to executive power.

Furthermore, as [Jonathan Swan](https://www.axios.com/trump-invincible-impeachment-dd93583a-3b06-4668-b744-1fb58385e41e.html) of Axios reported on Sunday, President Trump’s takeaway from his Senate acquittal is that he’s bulletproof. “Trump and his entire inner circle convey supreme self-confidence, bordering on a sense of invincibility,” according to Swan. “Over the past month, Trumpworld’s sense of being unbeatable has only grown. This is partly because the president sometimes defines victory in narrow terms.” The idea, perhaps best exemplified by [Sen. Joni Ernst](https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2020/02/02/sotu-ernst-trump.cnn) (R-Iowa), that Trump has learned his lesson from the impeachment episode is risible.

So is that it for American democracy? Nah.

I do not want to minimize the illiberal nature of the Trump administration. When Secretary of State Mike Pompeo [pitches a fit](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/01/26/secretary-slander/?itid=lk_inline_manual_8) because an NPR reporter acts like a reporter and then [tries to claim](https://www.politico.com/news/2020/02/02/npr-feud-pompeo-press-freedom-kazakhs-110384) his behavior is perfectly consistent with press freedom, he is, you know, [lying](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/01/26/secretary-slander/?itid=lk_inline_manual_8). That is not good for America. Neither is the [reported effort by Trump](https://t.co/Gm8HBaAaIA) to punish former national security adviser John Bolton for writing a memoir confirming everything the House managers said about Trump.

These petty acts of revenge, while troubling, are not the end of the republic. And even if elected officials seem to be behaving in as self-interested a manner as political scientists would predict,