

The Washington Times

Governors try to seal off states but forget about economic and personal freedoms

David Keene

July 21, 2020

Whether these quarantines work is open to debate, but one can understand the reluctance of the governor of a state with few cases wondering about the wisdom of letting thousands of people from states like New York, California or Hawaii who have a statistically far higher likelihood of infection into his or her state.

The problem with this approach is that since it is impossible to actually seal off one state from another the virus usually leaks from one jurisdiction to another. It turns out that the often nonsensical restrictions some governors have imposed within their states have a tendency to do the same thing.

Thus, we see governors who one might have assumed had more common sense aping the restrictions imposed elsewhere either because they actually think they might work or, as is more likely, they don't want others to impose harsher restrictions than they allowing their critics to blame them if the rate of infections in their state increases.

Washington's Gov. Jay Inslee isn't the only state official who has allowed his imagination to run free as he concocts plans to keep his constituents locked down or "sheltering in place" as they grapple with how to handle, slow or stop the spread of COVID-19, but he is one who seems to relish ordering them about.

He put his novel perspective on display briefly in 2016 as he vied for the Democratic presidential nomination, but found few buyers. In 2018, the CATO Institute named him America's "worst" governor from among a group that even then included the likes of New York's Andrew Cuomo and Connecticut's Ned Lamont. This was before the virus wafted its way over from China, but he was already hard at work limiting the freedom of the men and women who had elected him.

When the virus did arrive on our shores, Mr. Inslee, like other progressive state executives, began dreaming up and imposing restrictions that locked down and wiped out much of his state's economy while ordering an increasingly fearful citizenry to avoid the outdoors, lock themselves in their homes and, as he and others put it, "shelter in place."

The governor routinely dismisses his critics as deranged or worse. He was recently asked by a reporter to respond to a report that the number of those who have died in the state as a result of contracting the virus has been overstated by as much as 12% to 13%.

The beauty of our federal system is that for every Jay Inslee there is someone like Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson or Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee willing to attack the same problem in ways that aim to preserve economic and personal freedom. In the case of the current pandemic, the

effectiveness of these various approaches will be judged so that future policy-makers will be better prepared to handle the next one.