



New, Old Normal: Feds Drag Feet on Lifting COVID Restrictions

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While Texas is **accelerating a return to normalcy** from the COVID-19 pandemic, the White House seems to be going the opposite direction. Days before Gov. Greg Abbott lifted all statewide COVID restrictions in Texas, President Joe Biden said he hopes for a return to normal by "next Christmas." Dr Anthony Fauci also recently said Americans may have to wear masks until next year, even if vaccinated. At the same time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is **warning about the spread of variants** leading to another COVID wave.

Local Democrats have been even more vocal in pushing to keep COVID restrictions in place. Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner and Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo both blasted Abbott, insisting strict mandates are still necessary.

Not everyone agrees. **Dr. Jeffrey Singer**, practicing surgeon and senior fellow at the Cato Institute, says many Democrat leaders are acting like it's still March 2020 rather than March 2021. "I think it was reasonable back when we knew very little about this virus for generalized lockdowns to be put into place," says Singer. "But now it's a year later, we know a lot more, and we also know that restrictions have their own harms."

"We've got vaccines going out, and I think it's reasonable right now to trust the people armed with the right information to make their own judgments," he continues.

Dr. Singer also doesn't believe lifting COVID restrictions is as dangerous as people like Turner and Hidalgo are making it out to be. "I don't think lifting a mask mandate is the same thing as telling people not to wear masks," he says. "It's telling people to use their own judgment based on the situation."

There also remains scant proof that widespread mask mandates and lockdowns have been effective in curbing the virus. "Some states have had much less restrictions than others and haven't fared any worse," says Singer. "So I think now it's time to give the people back responsibility over the decision making."