

Science – Not Politics – Will Lead Us Out of COVID-19

The deadly COVID-19 pandemic has caused national economic disruption and generated significant uncertainty for many Americans. The development of safe, effective vaccines and treatments are essential to protect the public's health and restore the nation's economy.

As we persevere and eagerly anticipate the end of the pandemic, we need trusted guidance from our nation's leaders.

To promote public health and economic recovery, government decisions must be based on evidence – not politics or individual interests. Decisions perceived as influenced by political priorities lower the public's confidence in science, research, innovation, and public health efforts. Already, 78 percent of Americans worry the COVID-19 vaccine approval process is being driven by politics rather than science.¹ The leaders of our federal agencies—even if they serve as political appointees—must be independent voices that are guided by evidence and the integrity of their agencies' employees.

By clearly explaining the processes in place to ensure scientific rigor, federal agencies and government leaders will build the confidence and public trust necessary for America to meet this challenge. Leaders should directly address public concern and skepticism about the rapid development of COVID-19 vaccinations, including expressed worries that “steps are being skipped” or questions about safety. Focusing on the well-established guidelines for federal approval, rather than factors impacting the timing of an authorization, will foster trust and bolster the public's willingness to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Federal agencies and government leaders can also partner with trusted clinician, patient, and minority community organizations to build confidence through transparent communications. We will not be able to fully “return to normal” until an effective vaccine is widely available and accepted as safe.

Evidence derived from clinical trials that meet FDA standards should drive assessment of which COVID-19 therapeutics are safe and effective. In times of crisis, it is natural to want to offer hope to those facing hardship. However, federal agencies need to continue to support the existing, formal scientific efforts that allow for the study of the safety and efficacy of experimental therapeutics. Authorizing widespread use prematurely may impede participation in the types of comparative studies needed to illustrate the safety and effectiveness of a treatment.

Routine, rapid, accurate, and easy-to-access COVID-19 testing—followed by timely and efficient contact tracing—is needed to help prevent community spread. Individuals exposed to a person with COVID-19 should be tested, even if they are not (yet) exhibiting symptoms. Known asymptomatic carriers must be

¹ [STAT/Harris Poll, August 2020](#).

directed to isolate to reduce community spread. The ability to rapidly test, contact trace, and quarantine individuals with a confirmed COVID-19 infection will empower America to restore a robust national economy and safely allow in-person school attendance.

The nation looks to the leaders of our health care agencies to establish and maintain confidence in public health guidance, vaccines, and therapeutics. By sticking to science, you build public faith in the process. Stand strong and we will join with you to communicate that scientists are leading the way to ensure treatments and vaccines are safe and effective – and in turn – lead the nation to full recovery.

AcademyHealth	Biophysical Society
Aging Life Care Association	CancerCare
AliveAndKickn	Caregiver Action Network
Alliance for Aging Research	Coalition for the Life Sciences
Alpha-1 Foundation	Consortium of Social Science Associations
Alstrom Syndrome International	Entomological Society of America
American Academy of Family Physicians	Epilepsy Foundation
American Academy of Neurology	Everylife Foundation for Rare Diseases
American Academy of Pediatrics	Families USA
American Anthropological Association	Federation of American Scientists
American Association for Dental Research	FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy	Friends of Cancer Research
American Association on Health and Disability	Global Healthy Living Foundation
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists	Global Liver Institute
American College of Physicians	GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer
American Geriatrics Society	HealthyWomen
American Medical Association	Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome Network
American Nurses Association	Infectious Diseases Society of America
American Pharmacists Association	Lakeshore Foundation
American Psychiatric Association	Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
American Society for Cell Biology	Lupus Foundation of America
American Society of Consultant Pharmacists	Men's Health Network
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene	Mended Hearts
Arthritis Foundation	MLD Foundation
Association of American Medical Colleges	National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
Association of Black Cardiologists	National Breast Cancer Coalition
Association of Jewish Aging Services	National Communication Association
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO)	National Consumers League
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America	National Foundation for Infectious Diseases
Big Cities Health Coalition	National Health Council
	National Hispanic Medical Association
	National Medical Association
	National Minority Quality Forum

National Organization for Rare Disorders
National Psoriasis Foundation
National Treasury Employees Union (representing
the employees of FDA)
NBIA Disorders Association
Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Foundation
Prevent Blindness
Prostate Cancer International
Public Affairs Council

Spina Bifida Association
StopAfib.org
The Arc of the United States
The Gerontological Society of America
The Mended Hearts, Inc
Thomas J. Long School of Pharmacy, University of
the Pacific
Tribal Ground LLC
USP