

"He can do anything he wants"

Trump says anti-vaccine zealot Robert F. Kennedy Jr. will have leading health policy role in his administration

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1 November 2024

Since endorsing Donald Trump for president in August, far-right anti-vaccine zealot Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has played an increasingly prominent role in Trump's campaign, particularly at its final events.

For over two decades, Kennedy, who has no medical degree, has used his immense wealth, fame and connections to spread the pernicious lie that vaccines cause virtually all developmental disorders and diseases. His own right-wing, independent presidential campaign having failed to gain traction, Kennedy offered his services to Trump following the anti-Trump assassination attempt in Butler, Pennsylvania.

Speaking at the fascist Madison Square Garden rally this past Sunday, Trump touted Kennedy's endorsement of his campaign, declaring, "Having him is such a great honor. ... I'm going to let him go wild on health. I'm going to let him go wild on the food. I'm going to let him go wild on medicines."

In light of recent food-borne illnesses at McDonald's and Boar's Head and the liberties already afforded by federal officials in the food industry, such a policy will have significant and deadly implications for the population.

Trump followed this up by bringing Kennedy onto the platform for his stump speeches in Las Vegas, Nevada, on Thursday, October 31, and in Warren, Michigan, on Friday, November 1. Trump promised that Kennedy would "take care of women's health" and added in Michigan that Kennedy would "take care of men's health and your children's health." He continued, "I said you can do anything. You just go ahead and enjoy yourself, Bobby."

When the two appeared together at a restaurant in Dearborn, Michigan on Friday, reporters asked Trump if he was "comfortable" with Kennedy's views on vaccines. Trump, with Kennedy by his side, responded by boasting that Kennedy would "have a big role in healthcare."

Pressed on Kennedy's anti-vaccine history, Trump said, "We'll be talking about a lot of things, but he's going to have

a big role in healthcare, very big role. He knows it better than anybody. He has some views that I happen to agree with very strongly and have for a long time."

It does not take a great stretch to surmise the views on which Trump, promoter of "Kung Flu" and the "China virus," and Kennedy agree, including Kennedy's antisemitic conspiracy theory that the coronavirus was engineered to spare the "Chinese" and "Ashkenazi Jews."

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, right-wing forces opposed to any and all public health measures that infringe on profit-making have waged a concentrated campaign against all mitigation and elimination strategies, including vaccinations. That Kennedy is being elevated to the forefront of Trump's campaign in the lead-up to the election, and its aftermath, portends a massive attack on public healthcare, including vaccination programs in schools.

Even before he was endorsed by Kennedy, Trump repeatedly vowed on the campaign trail to "not give one penny to any school that has a vaccine mandate or mask mandate."

Vaccines and early child immunizations have extended and saved millions of lives around the globe. From eradicating smallpox to reducing polio cases by 99 percent worldwide, vaccines have, as a *Scientific American* essay explained, "saved more lives than almost any other intervention."

A May study published in *The Lancet* found that since 1974, six years after the assassination of RFK Jr.'s uncle John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas, vaccinations have prevented 154 million deaths. Of these, 146 million were children younger than five years of age, of which 101 million were younger than 12 months old.

A Global Health Observatory found that the rate of death among children under five has declined from 12.8 million in 1990 to 4.9 million in 2022, an almost 60 percent decline.

These are astounding figures that underscore the essential importance of vaccines.

Since the first COVID-19 vaccine was delivered on December 8, 2020, the vaccinations, despite the vaccine nationalism that saw inequitable distribution of these treatments, prevented an estimated 14.4 million deaths in just one year from the infection. According to an excess death analysis, the COVID-19 vaccines prevented close to 20 million fatalities. This equates to a global reduction of 63 percent in total deaths. Yet global coverage for these life-saving treatments has stalled and may be reversing. In 2023, 14.5 million children missed out on vaccinations.

For sections of the financial oligarchy, reducing deaths, especially of “non-productive” elements in society, is no longer viewed as a worthy goal or desirable expense.

Ingratiating himself to Trump while serving as his campaign surrogate on the Tucker Carlson live tour in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, this past September, Kennedy praised Trump’s “extraordinary gifts,” the first being “that he has very good instincts.” Kennedy elaborated: “When he came out the first time, you remember, he was very against the lockdowns publicly.”

Kennedy continued:

He was for hydroxychloroquine, he was for alternative medicines. He was against the masks, but he was surrounded by bureaucrats who ... ultimately pushed back on those assumptions and got us into some policies that were really bad for our country.

He’s not going to do that again.

Kennedy’s attack on lockdowns is the rallying cry of sections of the financial oligarchy who remain outraged that workers took matters into their own hands and walked off their jobs in March 2020 as the threat of the COVID-19 virus became apparent. While the trade union bureaucracies, the Trump White House and Congress knew the danger the virus posed, they did everything in their power to downplay the threat and keep workers on the job producing profit.

When Kennedy praises Trump’s “very good instincts” in being against lockdowns, he is praising the fact that the fascist Trump is willing to sacrifice any number of workers’ lives in the interests of profit. It should be recalled that as workers walked off their jobs, Trump took to Fox News and his social media accounts to attack the closures and mobilized his Proud Boy and Three Percenter militia supporters.

On April 30, 2020, fascists armed with AR-15 rifles stormed the Capitol in Lansing, Michigan, and threatened lawmakers with violence if they did not “open up” Michigan to mass

infection.

The elevation of Kennedy in the final days of Trump’s electoral campaign is a signal that large sections of the financial oligarchy are prepared to end public vaccination and normalize mass death from previously contained infectious diseases.

That Kennedy can gain an audience with his anti-vaccine conspiracy theories is entirely the fault of the Democratic Party. In the 2020 election, millions of people mistakenly thought that voting for Joe Biden was a vote for “following the science” and promoting public health.

Instead, upon assuming the presidency after Trump’s failed coup, Biden, with the assistance of the trade union bureaucracies, including that of the American Federation of Teachers, sought to re-open schools so parents could go back to work producing profits for Wall Street. Biden and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), including Dr. Anthony Fauci, promoted the “vax-only” strategy as a magic bullet to deal with the pandemic, in the process miseducating the public while providing succor to the fascist right.

Instead of combining vaccinations with the whole arsenal of public health measures to eliminate COVID-19, including infrastructure refitting that could deliver clean and safe air, the Biden administration, employing the tactics of its predecessor, left it up to individual states, including those run by far-right governors, to set their own policies.

This allowed the most reactionary and anti-scientific conceptions to flourish as data showing mass infection and death was suppressed, while new variants ran—and continue to run—wild. RFK Jr.’s rise as a staunch anti-vax proponent is bound up with the refusal of the Democrats to employ known public health measures to eliminate the pandemic. More than 800,000 died from COVID-19 in the US under Biden, and 50,000 more will in the fifth year of the pandemic.

In opposition to the ruling class policy of anti-science that places the “right of profit” above all else, the working class must adopt a class-conscious, socialist public health policy that puts the lives and safety of workers and their families first. This requires a political struggle against the capitalist political parties and their system.



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