

Resistance to wearing face masks is certain to continue | Golden

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What is it about being directed to wear a face mask in public to protect oneself and others from an incurable virus that so infuriates and offends some people they belittle and berate those around them, assault store clerks and generally make fools of themselves for the millions who view their cellphone-recorded antics on YouTube?

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Surely, they recognize a pandemic that has ravaged the country, sickened more than four million, killed another 150,000, crashed the economy, shut down businesses, closed schools and overloaded hospitals.

Even as public health and medical experts estimate that wearing masks can reduce the infection spread by 65%, there are those who swagger through public spaces unmasked as a sign of their individuality, a statement they will not stand by idly while government tells them what to do, even if it places lives at risk.

Some bellow that a face mask mandate places their Constitutional rights under attack. For others its a natural contrariness toward all things governmentally mandated. That their actions show gross disrespect and disdain for others seems to have escaped them.

Their arguments are similar to those heard decades ago in opposition to a requirement that motorcycle riders and passengers wear protective helmets and that drivers and passengers in motor vehicles wear seat belts.

When the mandatory helmet law was under consideration in the New Jersey Legislature in the 1970s, hundreds of bikers roared up and down State Street, the wind in their hair as they demonstrated for the freedom as American citizens to bash their skulls on the asphalt.

The state's seat belt requirement didn't attract the same noisy crowd when it was enacted in 1984, but the opposition was fundamentally identical — another example of government sticking its nose where it didn't belong.

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New Jersey prohibits using a handheld cellphone to call to wish your Aunt Mabel a happy birthday while tooling down the Turnpike at 70 mph and it bans texting to set up an appointment to meet friends at the mall while drifting across the center line of the roadway.

Like the mandate to wear a face mask, these government directives were designed to protect the lives of those involved and those innocents who got in their way.

Constitutional or individual rights weren't violated and the greater good was clearly served. Lives were spared and the severity of injuries was diminished.

Government mandates private behavior in dozens of ways most of which no one thinks twice about. Boarding an airplane requires identity verification, X-rays, pat-downs and empty-your-pockets searches.

There is, of course, a crucial and significant difference between helmet, seat belt and cellphone regulations and the requirement to wear a face mask in public: The former will likely never be lifted while the latter at some point will be.

A vaccine will be developed and Americans will receive a protection which will assure that daily life will slowly return to what it was prior to February.

Face masks will become relics, shoved into the bottom dresser drawer and dragged out to show the grandchildren what it was like during the great COVID-19 pandemic of 2020.

It might also be explained to them why some people resisted what was clearly in their best interest and why some reacted so violently when confronted with a request to demonstrate consideration for the well-being of others.

In fairness, the overwhelming majority of Americans accept the need for masks, even those residing in states that encourage it but do not mandate it.

New Jersey is approaching 16,000 deaths and 180,000 infections, and face masking has contributed significantly to the steady decline in both.

Compliance, while high, is still ignored as evidenced in photographs and cellphone videos of groups of unmasked individuals in often overcrowded spaces.

Younger people believe they will not become infected or, if they do, the discomfort will be minor and fleeting. Little thought is given to their potential to infect others with whom they come in contact and who may be more susceptible, through age or underlying medical conditions, to suffer far more serious consequences.

Resistance to face masking is certain to continue as will incidents of verbal and physical confrontations — the stuff of YouTube videos.

Normally, the rights of individuals are deserving of respect. In the current climate, however, it might be wise to remember the admonition “Your right to punch me in the nose ends at the point where my nose begins.”

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