



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on February 1, 2023

House Votes to Effectively End Covid Emergency

The end of the “two weeks to flatten the curve” seems to be finally approaching. On Tuesday, House Republicans passed a bill effectively ending the state of the national “public health emergency” related to the Covid-19 pandemic, the day after the White House announced it would lift the Covid-19 national emergency and public health emergency (PHE) on May 11. The House also voted to end the federal Covid vaccine mandate for healthcare workers.

H.R. 382, the “[Pandemic is Over Act](#),” terminates the public health emergency on the day the bill is enacted. The measure passed the House on a party-line vote of 220-210.



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The title refers to the verbatim statement made by Joe Biden back in September 2021. “The pandemic is over,” Biden said in an interview with CBS News. “We still have a problem with Covid,” he added, “We’re still doing a lot of work on it. But the pandemic is over.” However, the statement did not stop Biden’s Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) from [extending](#) the emergency in October 2022 and then again in January 2023.

During the debate on the floor, Brett Guthrie (R-Ky.), the lead sponsor of the bill, [said](#),

President Biden has taken too long to act on his statement last September that the pandemic is over, which is why I am moving forward with my bill to end the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency and finally restore checks and balances between Congress and the Executive Branch.

The congressman added that “the American people are tired of living in a perpetual state of emergency and it’s long overdue for Congress to take back the authorities granted under Article 1 of the Constitution.” Indeed, the past three years have signified the establishment of “medical tyranny” in which the healthcare agencies under the umbrella of the HHS, as well as other entities within the executive branch, subjected Americans to unlawful and unethical policies that restricted their God-given rights and freedoms.

According to Guthrie, “Since President Biden took office, we have seen the pandemic used to justify ... countless executive overreaches” such as the “one-size-fits-all vaccine mandates for health care workers, mask mandates, and eviction moratoriums.”

According to media reports, House Democrats mostly focused their criticism of the measure on its timing.

“A pandemic of this magnitude cannot be unwound overnight. We cannot flip a switch and make COVID-19 end,” [claimed](#) Rep. Frank Pallone (D-N.J.), seemingly confused about “Covid-19” as a disease,



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“the pandemic” (which [never was](#) in a traditional sense of the word), and “the public health emergency,” which was never justified in the first place. No wonder Pallone invoked references to “chaos and confusion” further in his speech.

The House also passed H.R. 497, the “[Freedom for Health Care Workers Act](#),” which would end the Covid vaccine mandate for healthcare providers that receive funds through Medicare and Medicaid, with seven Democrats siding with their Republican colleagues. Congress.com, which tracks actions on all federal legislation, does not reflect the names of the Democrats who supported the bill.

“No American should ever be forced to choose between the COVID shot or losing their livelihood,” [stated](#) Rep. Jeff Duncan (R-N.C.), who introduced the bill last week. He added that the mandate from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is “unscientific, un-American, and deeply damaging to healthcare workers as we already face a nationwide staff shortage.”

The CMS vaccine mandate was introduced in November 2021 and applied to more than 17 million workers at approximately 76,000 health care facilities, [according](#) to the White House.

The day before the vote, the White House released a [statement](#) calling the potential end of the mandate “a threat to the lives of patients and health care workers alike,” and said the bill would be vetoed should it pass the Senate and reach Biden’s desk.

The White House quoted the long-unsubstantiated worry that the unvaccinated healthcare workers would somehow endanger the health and lives of vulnerable patients. However, it has long been common knowledge, even among the top healthcare agencies, that the Covid shots prevent neither infection nor transmission of Covid. In fact, the latest [findings](#) suggest that a higher number of doses directly correlates with a higher rate of Covid infections. In other words, the people who have been boosted are more likely to get infected.

It is worth briefly noting the brow-raising explanation of the May 11 timeline established by the White House and provided by Biden. Interacting with reporters on Tuesday, the occupant of the White House said, “The Covid emergency will end when the Supreme Court ends it. We’ve extended it to May the 15th [sic] to make sure we get everything done. That’s all.” The statement [drew](#) surprise and ridicule from social media users.

On Monday, January 30, the president’s Office of Management and Budget [officially notified](#) Congress of the administration’s plan to extend both Covid-related emergency declarations to May 11, and then end them both on that date. Biden’s clumsy mention of the Supreme Court was likely a reference to the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) attempt to end the Title 42 border policy (cited in the letter to Congress), which is rooted in the emergency and allows for border officials to rapidly expel illegal migrants. The nation’s highest court ruled in December 2022 that the measure must stay in place.

What Does It Mean?

As evidenced by cuts to federal spending on the “emergency,” lawmakers agreed that Covid was winding down back in December 2022. According to the *Washington Examiner*:

Lawmakers had already reached a deal in the omnibus end-year spending bill to end a practice that was put in place with the emergency declaration that required that states offer continuous enrollment for Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), public health insurance programs for low-income people, in order to receive additional federal funding. It has allowed millions of people who may have exceeded the income levels



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to qualify without a temporary or permanent lapse in coverage. Beginning in April, states will be allowed to begin removing ineligible people from Medicaid.

Perhaps one of the main questions related to the development is whether the emergency use authorizations (EUA) of Covid vaccines, treatments, and tests would end. If the emergency is over, there is no need to use experimental vaccines and boosters, right? Theoretically, all of them — including vaccines for children and all the boosters — should be recalled. Those medicines and tools that were fully licensed would be allowed to remain on the market, but the customers would have to pay for them out of pocket.

Apparently, that is not the case.

As uncovered by [CNN](#), HHS has smartly covered for vaccine manufacturers whose bottom lines would be threatened by issuing “two other emergency declarations that provide broader access to medical measures for Covid-19”:

For instance, the emergency use authorizations for tests, treatments and vaccines are not tied to the public health emergency, but HHS will have to determine when to end the declaration that allows their use.

According to CNN, the HHS also covered pharmacists who may injure children by administering Covid shots. The rule is set to expire in October 2024.

Also, thanks to the provisions provided in the omnibus bill, experimental Covid antivirals such as Paxlovid would also remain covered by Medicare.

In a [Twitter thread](#), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) practically declared that its powers to allow shoddily tested drugs to market will not end with the termination of the emergency:

Importantly, the ending of the public health emergency declared by HHS under the Public Health Service Act will not impact FDA’s ability to authorize devices (including tests), treatments or vaccines for emergency use.

It remains to be seen how - and if — Congress reacts to that.





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