



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on May 27, 2020

Days After Maskless Beach Selfies, Virginia Governor Northam Issues Decree That All Virginians Wear Masks

RICHMOND — Virginia Governor Ralph Northam (D) announced Tuesday that — as of Friday, May 29 — any Virginian over the age of 10 will be required to wear a mask in all public places. Taking the same tone he took in March when announcing the “social distancing guidelines” — one of a father correcting his errant children — Northam made it clear that this is not up for discussion. In other words, wear a mask or stay home.



Sharing the stage with a Virginia flag and a seal bearing the Latin phrase that is the motto of the Commonwealth of Virginia — *Sic Semper Tyrannis* (thus always to tyrants) — Northam issued his dictatorial decree that wearing a mask is “the right thing” to do and residents of the birthplace of freedom have no choice in the matter. The irony appeared lost on him.

And while holding a press conference announcing the requirement for residents of the Old Dominion to wear masks, Northam addressed dual microphones covered with foam pop filters. Those microphones were shared by his “experts” as each of them came forward to answer questions fielded to them. This writer is familiar with those microphones and the foam pop filters on them. They only work if addressed from within a few inches. Those filters are germ traps.

Furthermore, dressed in his usual attire of slacks, button down shirt, and buttoned blazer (with no tie), Northam added one conspicuous accessory: He wore a non-medical face mask around his neck the entire time he was shown on camera. All of the experts either were not wearing masks at all when on camera or removed them as they approached the germ-laden microphones. One expert even removed his mask and laid it on the podium to address the microphones before putting it back on when he was finished.

The ASL interpreters providing sign language for the press conference — as well as others on the stage with Northam — did not appear to be properly practicing “social distancing.” Oh, the hypocrisy.

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After spending a few minutes addressing the recent statistics of the COVID-19 pandemic, Northam switched gears and addressed what everyone came to hear. He said that, moving into phase two, “Everyone will need to wear a face covering when you are inside at a public place starting this Friday.” He went on to explain that the regulation applies to anyone over the age of 10 “at a store, a barber shop, a restaurant, on public transportation, at a government building, or anywhere where people can congregate in groups.”

He said the following exceptions would be allowed: “If you are eating or drinking at a restaurant, if you are exercising, if you have a health condition that keeps you from wearing a face covering.” The accompanying slide adds, “If you have trouble breathing or are unable to remove the mask without help.”



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In addressing how Virginians are to procure masks on such short notice — and with a signal to their worthlessness — Northam said, “You can make your own. You can find a plan on the Internet, and all you need is a piece of cloth and two rubber bands. You can even grab a bandanna.”

It appears that medical professionals have been doing it all wrong for generations. After all, if cloth could stop the transmission of the coronavirus, those expensive medical masks are entirely superfluous in operating rooms and when dealing with infectious patients.

When asked about how this decree would be enforced, Northam was quick to say that it will not be considered a law-enforcement matter. “This is about people’s health. It’s not about locking people up in jail and giving them large fines.” He added that enforcement “will be done through the Virginia Department of Health.” Though asked repeatedly, neither he nor his team provided any details except to say that businesses that repeatedly fail to enforce the regulations could have their licenses revoked.

Another element of the mask regulations is that the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) will be tasked with developing Covid-19 Workplace Safety Emergency Standards. Again, details were scarce.

Northam made reference to those who are “following the rules,” saying they are “doing the right thing” by adhering to “social distancing” requirements. Apparently, leading by example is a foreign concept to Comrade Northam.

Just days before issuing this mandate, Northam was taken to task by those paying attention, after he was photographed multiple times on Saturday on the oceanfront at Virginia Beach. In those photos, Northam can be seen without a mask and standing side by side with strangers posing for mobile phone pictures. At Tuesday’s press conference, Northam played the “We’re all in this together” card, saying that he was “unprepared” on Saturday, adding, “We’re all forming new habits and routines and we’re all adjusting to this new normal.”

Apparently aware that the order for everyone over the age of 10 to wear masks whenever in public was in sharp contrast to his weekend photo-op spree, Northam began the press conference by saying, “I’d like to update you on what has happened since we met on Friday, starting by addressing my visit to the oceanfront on Saturday.” He then went on to say, “On Friday, the beach was allowed to open only after demonstrating to our team that the city had a plan and could execute that plan to comply with social distancing guidelines on the beach and the boardwalk.”

He explained that Virginia Beach “made commitments for extensive cleaning, for educating people about the safety measures, and for deploying teams of ambassadors to promote physical distancing.” Northam then claimed that when he toured the beach Saturday, it was “with the intention of speaking to the mayor, thanking first responders and ambassadors, and seeing how the reopening plan was working.” He added that he also had “planned to take a few questions from the press.” Northam said that on his way to speak with reporters, “some well-wishers came up to” him and “asked to take pictures.” He added that he was “not prepared, because [his] mask was in the car.”

Even after his failure (read: refusal) to abide by his own “social distancing requirements” while strolling along the beach and boardwalk in Virginia Beach, Northam stated that he is “convinced that Virginia Beach can be a model for the rest of our country — a model for how to open the right way and how to operate a beach safely, even while the pandemic remains with us.”

Though Northam said he takes “full responsibility” for not wearing a mask, his explanation (read: half-baked excuse) falls short on at least two important points. First, if — as he has stated multiple times in



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recent weeks and several times in Tuesday's press conference — his mandates are about "keeping Virginians safe" and are an embodiment of the "right thing" to do, why would he even get out of the car without his allegedly life-saving mask? Second, forgetting the mask is one thing; standing almost cheek to cheek with strangers for a mobile-phone selfie is another. Remember, he was ostensibly there to verify that Virginia Beach authorities were meeting the conditions of reopening, including compliance with "social distancing guidelines."

Even if he "forgot" to wear his mask, he could have informed those "well-wishers" that — due to the "social distancing guidelines" he, himself, put in place — he would not be posing with them for photos.

When asked by media at the press conference about the requirement for everyone to mask up, considering his gaffe over the weekend, he replied, "This is not just about me — This is about all Virginians and it's about their public safety."

His behavior shows that his mandates are more about controlling Virginians than keeping them "safe." Seen together, his behavior shows that his rule is "for thee, but not for me." It should also indicate to anyone paying attention that Northam — who was a practicing medical doctor before becoming a politician — seems to know both that the fear of COVID-19 is overblown and that masks are ineffectual as a protective measure. After all, actions speak louder than decrees.



Image: screenshot from [YouTube video](#)

C. Mitchell Shaw is a freelance writer and public speaker who addresses a range of topics related to liberty and the U.S. Constitution. A strong privacy advocate, he was a privacy nerd before it was cool.

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