

FRASER  
INSTITUTE

2022

# COVID-19

Lessons We Should Have Learned

COLLECTED ESSAYS

*Series editor: Donald J. Boudreaux*



*Essay Two:*

*The Abject Failure of Central Planning During Covid*

David R. Henderson

## ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

**Copyright © 2022 by the Fraser Institute.**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief passages quoted in critical articles and reviews.

**Date of Issue**

December 2022

**Media**

For media enquiries, please contact our Communications Department: 604.714.4582; e-mail: [communications@fraserinstitute.org](mailto:communications@fraserinstitute.org).

**About the Fraser Institute**

Our mission is to improve the quality of life for Canadians, their families, and future generations by studying, measuring, and broadly communicating the effects of government policies, entrepreneurship, and choice on their well-being.



# The Abject Failure of Central Planning During COVID

David R. Henderson

The man of system, on the contrary, is apt to be very wise in his own conceit; and is often so enamoured with the supposed beauty of his own ideal plan of government, that he cannot suffer the smallest deviation from any part of it. He goes on to establish it completely and in all its parts, without any regard either to the great interests, or to the strong prejudices which may oppose it.

He seems to imagine that he can arrange the different members of a great society with as much ease as the hand arranges the different pieces upon a chess-board. He does not consider that the pieces upon the chess-board have no other principle of motion besides that which the hand impresses upon them; but that, in the great chess-board of human society, every single piece has a principle of motion of its own, altogether different from that which the legislature might chuse to impress upon it. If those two principles coincide and act in the same direction, the game of human society will go on easily and harmoniously, and is very likely to be happy and successful. If they are opposite or different, the game will go on miserably, and the society must be at all times in the highest degree of disorder.

—Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1759

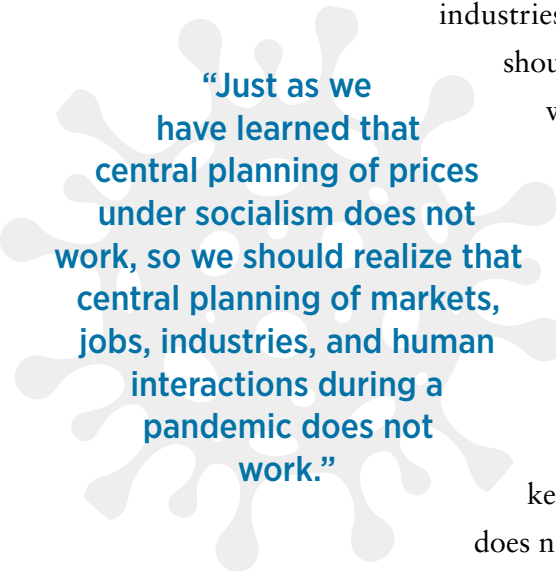
“There is only one person in the state of Washington who has the capability to save those lives right now, and it happens to be the governor of the state of Washington,” [Governor Jay] Inslee said Wednesday.

—Lauterbach, 2021, October 4

## Introduction

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, two Austrian economists, Ludwig von Mises and his most famous student, Friedrich Hayek, argued that central planning under socialism could not work. Their argument had to do with the inability of central planners to set prices in the absence of information about demands and supplies that only free markets could reveal.

Although their argument was airtight, it is not the only sound argument against central planning. The case against central planning is also more general. Not only do central planners lack the information needed to set rational prices, but also they lack the information needed to decide which



**“Just as we have learned that central planning of prices under socialism does not work, so we should realize that central planning of markets, jobs, industries, and human interactions during a pandemic does not work.”**

industries and markets should be shut down and which regulations should be imposed on various industries during a pandemic. Just as with central planning of the socialist variety, central planning to deal with COVID-19 caused many misallocations. All of these problems became apparent, to those who were paying attention, in the way that the vast majority of governments around the world have dealt with COVID-19 from about February 2020 until the present day. Just as we have learned that central planning of prices under socialism does not work, so we should realize that central planning of markets, jobs, industries, and human interactions during a pandemic does not work.

It’s even worse. Central planners also lack the incentive to get good information. They have very little “skin in the game.” Incentives in government are very different from incentives in the for-profit private sector. When owners of businesses make good decisions, they benefit and when they make bad decisions, they lose. But the central planners are government employees. When they make good decisions, their pay does not increase and even if it did, the increase, unlike in the for-profit private sector, would have no relation to the benefit generated by their good decisions. When government employees make bad decisions, their income will not fall by even a penny. So they can advocate locking down, or order the locking down, of large parts of the economy without having to worry about how bad the results of their actions are. For that reason, they often don’t bother to get good information and often simply ignore important information that’s staring them in the face.

### **Socialist planning**

In his book *Socialism*, originally published in German in 1922, Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises argued that central planning of an economy could not work. Goods and services in a completely socialist economy would be allocated by central planners at the top. Even if there were a market in consumption goods, Mises argued, central planners would have no rational way to place monetary values on goods used to produce other goods. He, in the Austrian tradition started by Carl Menger, called such production goods “goods of higher orders.” Mises gave an example of central planners trying to decide whether to build a new railway line. With private ownership, he noted, “we could use money calculations to decide.” But without monetary values to guide them, central planners would be lost.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Mises's most famous student, Friedrich Hayek, extended Mises's argument, putting the final intellectual nail in socialism's coffin. He pointed out that the most important information in an economy is necessarily decentralized. We all have knowledge of our own circumstances of time and place and this knowledge will never be available to a central body of planners, no matter how brilliant and informed they are. If Hayek were alive today, he would, no doubt, also argue that even central planners armed with powerful computers would not have the data to input into the computers. The only way an economy can incorporate the information in the minds of millions of participants, argued Hayek, is for there to be a relatively free market. This allows people to express their desires and act on their abilities and their information, both as consumers and as producers. In a 1945 article in the *American Economic Review*, Hayek gave the example of the tin market. The price of tin, he pointed out, was the only information about the tin market that tin producers and tin consumers needed to know, and the price came about due to relatively free interactions of millions of tin consumers and many dozens of tin producers.



### Central planning during a pandemic

As noted above, the argument against central planning is even more general than the argument about prices. It also applies to government policy during a pandemic. Among the important factors that governments do not have nearly enough information about are people's health, their resistance to disease, their attitudes to risk, or their financial circumstances to decide which industries, which jobs, or which sectors of the economy to shut down or limit. Health, for example, varies widely, as do people's attitudes to risk. Governments cannot take all these factors into account when making overall plans for an economy. This is true whether the central planning is by federal governments, state governments, or local governments.

Although Hayek argued that even if there were no problem of incentives under socialism it would not work, there are in fact major incentive problems under socialism, which Hayek never denied. And the massive incentive problems with central planning to deal with COVID-19 became apparent early on.

## Choosing industries and activities

Early in the pandemic, most state governments in the United States and the federal and provincial governments in all Canadian provinces and territories “locked down” their economies. Lockdowns typically involved some or all of the following:

- Ordering that businesses in all but “essential” parts of the economy be shut down, where the government defined “essential” and simply went with a list of 16 sectors of the economy that had been formulated many years earlier (Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, 2021, August 13);
- Ordering K-12 schools and government-run state colleges and universities to be shut down;
- Strictly limiting family and group interaction, including religious services at mosques, churches, and synagogues;
- Restricting personal movement and travel;
- Curfews.



One provincial government in Canada went further. The government of Ontario, which has 39 percent of Canada’s population, banned “non-essential” travel (CBC News, 2021, May 29) across its western and eastern borders. This ban lasted from April 16 to June 16, 2021.

What information would a government need in order to successfully manage a lockdown?

It would need to know the risk preferences of the various people involved and the losses to those people from foregone economic social activity. Government officials have no such information.

Because the officials lack such information, they tend to come up with blanket solutions that don’t distinguish among various people’s situations. I gave an example in “Economic Lessons from COVID-19,” from *Reason*, June 2021:

Central planners tend to come up with one-size-fits-all policies even when the evidence shows a large range of “sizes.” With the lockdowns, the most extreme instance of that may be the decision in various jurisdictions to close schools to in-person instruction. Even if, like me, you aren’t a fan of government schools, they arguably create at least one large valuable service: day care. So shutting them down—while paying full, or close to full, salaries to public school teachers—took away one of the most valuable services the institutions provided, while shifting the costs onto parents. (Henderson, 2021)

Leaving decisions in the hands of the individual actors in the economy, on the other hand, would have avoided some of the worst losses caused by lockdowns. Early in the pandemic, when most people lacked information but many feared the worst, people were energized and motivated to come up with ways of protecting themselves and their loved ones from getting a serious new disease. Indeed, we saw adjustments everywhere in society. Many people stopped going to bars and restaurants. The National Basketball Association, the National Hockey League, and NCAA basketball all stopped playing their games. The NBA and the NHL didn't start playing again for a few months and did so only in arenas bereft of fans. Indeed, the NBA teams played only in Orlando. The NCAA cancelled its March Madness tournament and didn't reschedule it. All of these self-limits on activities happened before any governor, premier, or prime minister imposed lockdowns.



We know now and, indeed, we could have known back in March 2020, that most of these self-limits were overreactions, at least for those under age 60. The data from Italy showed an extreme gradient in death rates from COVID-19. A study of COVID-19 fatalities published on March 23, 2020 (Onder, Rezza, and Brusaferro, 2020), showed no fatalities for people under age 30, only 4 fatalities for people aged 30 to 39, 53 fatalities for people 40 to 59, 139 fatalities for people 60 to 69, 578 fatalities for people 70 to 79, and 850 fatalities for people aged 80 or above. That means that the median age of death from COVID-19 in Italy was above 80. And, of course, getting back to the athletic examples, virtually all the athletes in the three organizations mentioned above were under age 40 and almost all were under age 30.

These overreactions were due to two things: (1) people's own attitudes to risk and their innumeracy about death rates and (2) the incessant media hyping about the dangers of COVID. Still, the advantage of leaving the decision in people's own hands and letting them be free to choose was that they could get new information and act on it. Indeed, that's what people in many areas did when allowed to. In June 2020, for example, California's government, which had imposed one of the harshest lockdowns, allowed bars to open for a few weeks. And, wonder of wonders, many people, especially young people, who were at little risk, started going to bars again.

As economist John Tamny put it in his book *When Politicians Panicked: The New Coronavirus, Expert Opinion, and a Tragic Lapse of Reason* Post Hill Press:

What cannot be stressed enough is that if the goal is figuring out the best way to combat a virus with no known cure, those who don't follow norms are as crucial producers of information that will enable victory as those who do. Precisely because they don't follow the unwritten societal rules, their contracting of the virus (or not), their sickness (or not) from ignoring broad social convention, and their death rates relative to the COVID-obsessed would hopefully give those searching for solutions exponentially more to work with. (2021: 213)

It's this kind of experimentation that was not allowed in most states or in any provinces or territories. One might think that allowing such freedom would put at risk people who are afraid of the virus. It would. But they are free to isolate themselves. Which is better? Isolating everyone by force or the threat of force, or letting people choose whether to isolate or not?



Moreover, when individuals and firms make decisions to deal with COVID, they can take account of local information. They also have better incentives: if their plans don't work well, they bear a substantial portion of the cost. So, for example, if a hairdresser in California had been allowed to stay open (for the first many months they were not so allowed), she and her clients could learn from experience just how risky

the transactions were. Many customers would be paying close attention and, especially with modern technological innovations like Yelp, many potential customers would have paid attention also.

### Incentives and bad decisions

While Mises and Hayek argued that government lacks the information to plan an economy, using central planning to deal with COVID has been shown to be even worse. In the United States, government officials such as Deborah Birx, a prominent member of the White House Coronavirus Task Force, and Anthony Fauci, another member of the Task Force, could get access to fairly granular data but didn't seem to care to do so.

How do I know that they didn't seem to care to get the data? In his book *A Plague Upon Our House*, Scott Atlas, who worked in the Trump White House on COVID for a few months in late 2020, gives



chapter and verse about how Birks, Fauci, and some of the other members of the Task Force were uninformed and apparently unwilling to be informed.<sup>1</sup>

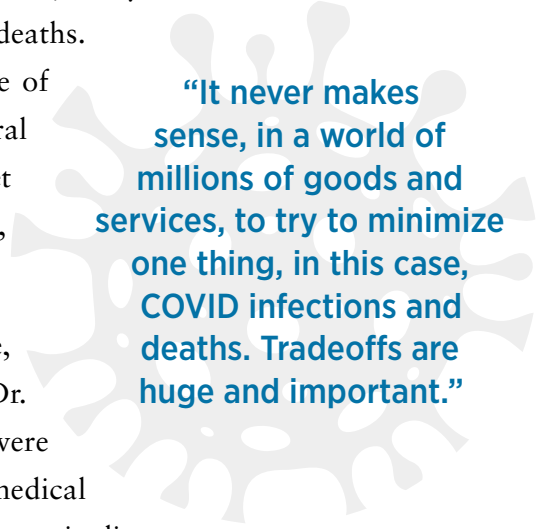
Atlas noticed early on how narrow and uninformed the Task Force members were. He writes:

It was baffling to me, an incomprehensible error of whoever assembled the Task Force, that there were zero public health policy experts and no experts with medical knowledge who also analyzed economic, social, and other broad health policy impacts other than the infection itself. Shockingly, the broad public health perspective was never part of the discussion among the Task Force health advisors other than when I brought it up. Even more bizarre was that no one seemed to notice. (Atlas, 2021: 86)

It never makes sense, in a world of millions of goods and services, to try to minimize one thing, in this case, COVID infections and deaths.

Tradeoffs are huge and important. To analogize to the case of socialist central planning, it would be as if an economy's central planners decided to maximize the amount of bread—and forget about eggs, other foods, home heating, transportation, clothing, and health care.


One thing Atlas noticed early in his time at the White House, which began in late July 2020, was that Birx, Fauci, and Dr. Robert Redfield, head of the Centers for Disease Control, were unwilling to dig into the data the way that scientists and medical professionals should be willing to do. Nor did they express interest in discussing the quickly evolving literature on the coronavirus. Atlas writes that he often brought copies of studies to the Task Force meetings but his impression was that few people read them. Fauci, Birx, and Redfield, he noted, never challenged each other.



**“It never makes sense, in a world of millions of goods and services, to try to minimize one thing, in this case, COVID infections and deaths. Tradeoffs are huge and important.”**

The central planners in President Trump's Task Force also did not pay attention to the data in the studies of schools that showed just how safe K-12 schools were and the fact, known by the summer of 2020, that children rarely passed the virus on to adults. That meant that schools were one of the safest places to be for both students and teachers. Moreover, in their meetings the Task Force members never talked about the great devastation that school closings had inflicted on American children and their working parents. The closings were especially hard for lower-income households. Whatever our complaints about the government school system—and this author has many—they do provide day care. For more than a year in many parts of Canada and the United States schools were closed, the implicit day care was gone, and many women dropped out of the labour force to take care of their children.

This brings us to another incentive problem: the lack of incentive on the part of central planners to pay attention to objections from those whose lives they plan. When a government shuts down whole areas of an economy, one would normally expect that there would be widespread objection. But



**“People who could not work in their homes—restaurant workers, hotel workers, and many others—had their industries shut down and the planners paid little attention to their concerns.”**

although many people objected, members of the intelligentsia, which has a large effect on policy, typically did not object. One of the main reasons is that they were able to practice their occupations at home, using computers and phones and software such as Zoom.

But people who could not work in their homes—restaurant workers, hotel workers, and many others—had their industries shut down and the planners paid little attention to their concerns. One woman on Facebook in April 2020 put it particularly well:

Is anyone here supporting the lockdowns not getting a paycheck? Anyone here supporting the lockdowns of a single parent that hasn't received child support in months? Anyone here supporting the lockdowns of a business owner that is going to go out of business and lose everything they've built and sacrificed for? Anyone here in the middle of trying to buy a house, refinance a house and just lost their job? NOBODY in these positions that I've come across is supporting these draconian lockdowns. During the recession I lost half, HALF of my customer base who were small business owners. The ones that survived may not survive this. It's easy to support these things when you're not the one hurting financially. (Quoted in Henderson, 2020, April 13)

The central planners paid little attention to such concerns.

### **The special case of nursing homes**

One particularly egregious case of failed central planning was some state governments' treatment of nursing homes.

On October 4, 2020, biostatistician and epidemiologist Dr. Martin Kulldorff, professor of medicine at Harvard University, epidemiologist Dr. Sunetra Gupta of Oxford University, and epidemiologist and health economist Dr. Jay Bhattacharya of Stanford University Medical School wrote and released the Great Barrington Declaration. This pithy statement noted that the risk of death from COVID-19 to the elderly and infirm was three orders of magnitude greater than the risk of death to the young. For that reason, the three health care scholars argued, governments should allow those at minimal

risk of death to go about their lives normally and should focus protection on the vulnerable.

This seemed like common sense. But apparently for some US governors and their high-level administrators common sense was lacking. In March 2020, even after the vulnerability of the elderly was well-known, the New York State Department of Health sent



a directive to nursing homes that stated, “No resident shall be denied readmission or admission to the [nursing home] solely based on a confirmed or suspected diagnosis of Covid-19” (2020, March 25).

Anna Wilde Matthews, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter on health issues, broke the story on March 26. She noted that the directive also stated that nursing homes “are prohibited from requiring a hospitalized resident who is determined medically stable to be tested for Covid-19 prior to admission or readmission” (Matthews, 2020a). Although the New York state government reversed the mandate on May 10, 2020, much of the damage was done (Matthews, 2020b, May 14). Matthews notes that the number of “presumed and confirmed” fatalities in New York’s nursing homes, as of May 12, 2020, was 5,398. Researchers with the Empire Center estimated that that the COVID-positive admissions due to this policy “were associated with several hundred and possibly more than 1,000 additional resident deaths” (Hammond and Kingsbury, 2021, February 18).

The Pennsylvania Department of Health acted similarly to New York state’s bureaucracy. It stated in a March 18, 2020 memo:

Nursing care facilities must continue to accept new admissions and receive readmissions for current residents who have been discharged from the hospital who are stable to alleviate the increasing burden in the acute care settings. This may include stable patients who have had the COVID-19 virus. (Pennsylvania Department of Health, 2020, March 18)

New Jersey followed suit. On March 31, 2020, New Jersey governor Philip D. Murphy and the New Jersey Department of Health issued a similar order, stating that “No patient/resident shall be denied re-admission or admission to the post-acute care setting solely based on a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19” (New Jersey Department of Health, 2020, March 31).

### Other perverse outcomes caused by central planning

In his masterful book on the system-wide failures of Soviet central planning, *Red Plenty*, Francis Spufford (2010) tells of a machine produced in the Soviet Union that was better than the old machine that the plant had been producing. Unfortunately, it weighed less. Why was that a problem? Because central planners set prices according to weight: the heavier the item, the higher the price. So the manufacturer had a strong incentive to keep producing the old machine.<sup>2</sup>



Central planning of travel across the US-Canada border caused a similar problem. In 2020, traveling by bus was approximately 10 times as dangerous per passenger mile as traveling by commercial airlines (National Safety Council, 2022). But at the time of this writing, those who fly from Canada to the United States must produce a negative Covid test taken within 24 hours of leaving

Canada. On the other hand, those who drive from Canada to the United States do not have to show any Covid test result. This has created an artificial incentive for people to take the less-safe alternative.

Normally, for example, the Toronto Maple Leafs would have flown directly from Toronto to Florida to play the Lightning in the NHL playoffs. But one false positive can mess up team planning. So what did they do? They took buses from Toronto to Buffalo and then flew from Buffalo to Florida (Boehm, 2020, May 5). The Edmonton Oilers had an even more complicated route: flying from Edmonton to Vancouver, busing from Vancouver to Seattle, and then flying from Seattle to Los Angeles to play the Los Angeles Kings. The COVID travel rules caused people to take the more dangerous transportation mode.

### It's good to be the nomenklatura

In the Soviet Union, high-level bureaucrats were called the nomenklatura. They received special privileges such as the right to shop in special stores that carried Western goods and access to medical care, to name two benefits (Liivik, 2020, October 28).

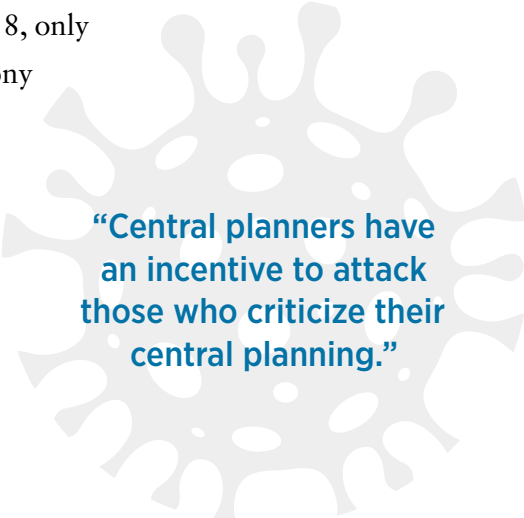
In the United States, we saw something similar with the high-level central planners of COVID-19. While they were telling everyone below them to wear masks, for example, they were often going maskless. One of the most famous cases was that of California governor Gavin Newsom, who had dinner with a large group at the pricy French Laundry restaurant in Napa. All were maskless. At first, Newsom lied about it, claiming that the dinner party was outdoors. He quickly backtracked

when pictures caught him in a lie (Melugin and Inshelwat, 2020, November 17). Another famous case was that of San Francisco mayor London Breed, dancing maskless in a San Francisco night club that was under the tight masking rules that she had set for the city she governed. Her explanation: “I was feeling the spirit and I wasn’t thinking about a mask” (CBS Bay Area, 2021, September 20). The masking rules, however, carried no exceptions for people either “feeling the spirit” or not thinking. But Breed did not have to worry about any legal trouble: she was in the nomenklatura.

### Central planners fight for their narrative

One issue with central planning not discussed by Mises or Hayek was that central planners have an incentive to attack those who criticize their central planning. Neither Mises nor Hayek was naïve. Both understood the perverse incentives that government officials have, but they didn’t discuss this issue in their analysis of central planning. Hayek did argue, however, in his 1944 classic, *The Road to Serfdom*, that under central planning the worst would rise to the top. So he probably would not have been surprised by the reaction to the Great Barrington Declaration (GBD) by Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health. On October 8, only four days after the GBD was published, Collins emailed Anthony Fauci, referring to the three well-published authors of the GBD as “fringe epidemiologists” and stating that there needed to be “a quick and devastating published takedown of its premises” (Lepore, 2021, December 18).

The hostility to the GBD by both establishment health bureaucrats and their numerous followers in the media biased the discussion on the best way to deal with the pandemic. Indeed, it often cut off discussion.



**“Central planners have an incentive to attack those who criticize their central planning.”**

### Conclusion

One lesson that many people have learned from the experience of socialist planning is that Mises and Hayek were right: central planning of an economy does not work. Even prominent long-time socialist Robert Heilbroner admitted as much late in his life, calling socialism “the tragic failure of the twentieth century” and giving Mises and Hayek explicit credit for their earlier insights (Heilbroner, 2008).

We are still early in the autopsy of government planning during COVID-19. At this point, few of the major supporters of central planning to deal with the pandemic have admitted their errors. Let’s hope that they do so before the next pandemic. And even if they don’t, let’s learn the lessons ourselves in the hope that we can stop central planning if and when the next pandemic occurs.

## Endnotes

- 1 Of course, I'm assuming that Atlas is telling the truth because all we're hearing is his side. But two facts make me comfortable in that assumption. First, in the years I've known him at the Hoover Institution, he has been a legendary truth teller. Second, what he says accords with much of what we saw from Birks and Fauci.
- 2 A note in the back of the book states that this example is made up but is based on a real example in the Soviet Union.

## References

- Atlas, Scott W. (2021). *A Plague Upon Our House*. Liberatio Protocol.
- Bhattacharya, Jay, Sunetra Gupta, and Martin Kulldorff (Undated). Great Barrington Declaration. <<https://gbdeclaration.org>>, as of November 16, 2022.
- Boehm, Eric (2020, May 5). Planes, Buses, and COVID Tests: How the NHL Playoffs Are Spotlighting America's Dumb Border Rules. *Reason*. <<https://reason.com/2022/05/05/planes-buses-and-covid-tests-how-the-nhl-playoffs-are-spotlighting-americas-dumb-border-testing-rules/>>, as of November 16, 2022.
- CBC News (2021, May 29). Ontario Extends Ban on Interprovincial Travel until June 16. CBC News. <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-interprovincial-travel-ban-june-16-1.6045754>>, as of November 16, 2022.
- CBS Bay Area (2021, September 20). San Francisco Mayor Defends Criticism After Video Catches Her Dancing Maskless at Night Club. CBS Bay Area. <<https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/san-francisco-mayor-london-breed-defends-criticism-after-video-dancing-maskless-night-club/>>, as of November 16, 2022.
- Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (2021, August 13). *Identifying Critical Infrastructure During COVID-19*. Government of the United States. <<https://www.cisa.gov/identifying-critical-infrastructure-during-covid-19>>, as of November 16, 2022.
- Hammond, Bill, and Ian Kingsbury (2021, February 18). COVID-positive Admissions Were Correlated with Higher Death Rates in New York Nursing Homes. Empire Center. <<https://www.empirecenter.org/publications/covid-positive-admissions-higher-death-rates/>>, as of November 16, 2022.
- Heilbroner, Robert (2008). Socialism. In David R. Henderson (ed.), *The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics* (Liberty Fund). <<https://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/Socialism.html>>, as of November 16, 2022.
- Henderson, David R. (2020, April 13). Liberation from Lockdown Now. *Daily Economy*. American Institute for Economic Research. <<https://www.aier.org/article/the-time-for-lockdown-liberation-is-now/>>, as of November 16, 2022.
- Henderson, David R. (2021). Economic Lessons from COVID-19. *Reason* (June). <<https://reason.com/2021/05/01/economic-lessons-from-covid-19/>>, as of November 16, 2022.
- Lauterbach, Cole (2021, October 4). Inslee's 'Only person' Comment About Saving Lives Raises Eyebrows. The Center Square. *Washington Examiner*. <<https://news.yahoo.com/inslee-only-person-saving-lives-200000912.html>>, as of November 16, 2022.
- Lepore, Stephen M. (2021, December 18). There Needs to Be a Quick and Devastating Takedown: Emails Show How Fauci and Head of NIH Worked to Discredit Three Experts Who Penned the Great Barrington Declaration Which Called for an End to Lockdowns. *Daily Mail* (UK). <<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10324873/Emails-reveal-Fauci-head-NIH-colluded-try-smear-experts-called-end-lockdowns.html>>, as of November 16, 2022.
- Liivik, Olev (2020, October 28). The Elite and Their Privileges in the Soviet Union. Communist Crimes, Estonian Institute of Historical Memory. <<https://communistcrimes.org/en/elite-and-their-privileges-soviet-union>>, as of November 16, 2022.

Matthews, Anna Wilde (2020a, March 26). New York Mandates Nursing Homes Take Covid-19 Patients Discharged from Hospitals. *Wall Street Journal*. <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-mandates-nursing-homes-take-covid-19-patients-discharged-from-hospitals-11585228215>>, as of November 16, 2022 [pay-wall].

Matthews, Anna Wilde (2020b, May 14). New York Sent Recovering Coronavirus Patients to Nursing Homes: “It Was a Fatal Error.” *Wall Street Journal*. <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-sent-recovering-coronavirus-patients-to-nursing-homes-it-was-a-fatal-error-11589470773>>, as of November 16, 2022 [paywall].

Melugin, Bill, and Shelly Inshelwat (2020, November 17). Fox 11 Obtains Exclusive Photos of Gov. Newsom at French Restaurant Allegedly Not Following COVID-19 Protocols. FOX 11 Los Angeles. <<https://www.foxla.com/news/fox-11-obtains-exclusive-photos-of-gov-newsom-at-french-restaurant-allegedly-not-following-covid-19-protocols>>, as of November 16, 2022.

National Safety Council, Injury Facts (2022). Deaths by Transportation Mode. *Safety Topics*. National Safety Council. <<https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/home-and-community/safety-topics/deaths-by-transportation-mode/>>, as of November 16, 2022.

New Jersey Department of Health (2020, March 31). Hospital Discharges and Admissions to Post-Acute Care Settings. Letter to Nursing Home and Comprehensive Rehabilitation Hospital Administrators, Directors of Nursing, and Hospital Discharge Planners. Government of New Jersey. <[https://www.nj.gov/health/healthfacilities/documents/CN/temp\\_waivers/HospitalDischarges\\_andAdmissions\\_toPost-AcuteCareSettings.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/health/healthfacilities/documents/CN/temp_waivers/HospitalDischarges_andAdmissions_toPost-AcuteCareSettings.pdf)>, as of November 16, 2022.

New York Department of Health (2020, March 25). Advisory: Hospital Discharges and Admissions to Nursing Homes. Letter to Nursing Home Administrators, Directors of Nursing, and Hospital Discharge Planners. Government of New York. <[https://skillednursingnews.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/03/DOH\\_COVID19\\_\\_NHAdmissionsReadmissions\\_\\_032520\\_1585166684475\\_0.pdf](https://skillednursingnews.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/03/DOH_COVID19__NHAdmissionsReadmissions__032520_1585166684475_0.pdf)>, as of November 16, 2022.

Onder, Graziano, Giovanni Rezza, and Silvio Brusaferro (2020, March 23). Case-Fatality Rate and Characteristics of Patients Dying in Relation to COVID-19 in Italy. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 323, 18: 1775-176. <<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2763667>>, as of November 16, 2022.

Pennsylvania Department of Health (2020, March 18). *Interim Guidance for Nursing Facilities During COVID-19*. Government of Pennsylvania. <[https://pahomecare.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/FINAL%20FOR%20DISTRO\\_Interim%20Nursing%20Facility%20Guidance%2003192020%20at%201500.pdf](https://pahomecare.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/FINAL%20FOR%20DISTRO_Interim%20Nursing%20Facility%20Guidance%2003192020%20at%201500.pdf)>, as of November 16, 2022.

Spufford, Francis (2010). *Red Plenty*. Graywolf Press.

Tamny, John (2021). *When Politicians Panicked: The New Coronavirus, Expert Opinion, and a Tragic Lapse of Reason*. Post Hill Press.

### About the author

David R. Henderson is an emeritus professor of economics with the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, a research fellow with the Hoover Institution, and a Fraser Institute senior fellow.

Professor Henderson is a widely respected public policy expert and educator. He is also the editor of *The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics*, a comprehensive but accessible summary of economics.

Born and raised in Canada, Professor Henderson earned a B.Sc. degree in mathematics from the University of Winnipeg before heading south to complete his Ph.D. in economics at the University of California, Los Angeles.

He is a frequent contributor to *The Wall Street Journal* and was previously a frequent contributor to *Fortune*. He has also written scholarly articles for the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *Journal of Monetary Economics*, *Cato Journal*, *Regulation*, *Contemporary Policy Issues*, and *Energy Journal*.

Professor Henderson served as a senior economist on President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers from 1982 to 1984, specializing in energy and health policy.

