

Statewide mask mandate gets backlash from residents

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Two days into the statewide mask mandate, many Campbell County residents already were fed up with what they believe to be an egregious instance of government overreach.

Local residents and elected officials voiced their displeasure Thursday with the recent health orders from Gov. Mark Gordon, with a state representative suggesting the county should sue the state.

The commissioners had called for a special meeting to discuss the mask mandate, as well as a few other things. When the meeting was complete, nearly three hours after it started, many people had voiced their concerns to the commission.

Commissioner Bob Maul said wearing a mask is the least he can do to keep his loved ones and his community safe.

"I'm much against the mask thing, but the big reason that I will wear a mask is because I'm really against shutting the community down again," he said. "I'll wear a mask, I'll walk on one hand, I'll do whatever it takes to keep this community open."

He said he wears a mask to protect his family, friends

and the residents of Campbell County.

"If that's too much to ask, then don't wear a mask. That's your right," he said.

The commissioners were not fans of the new orders.

"We don't think this is written well," said Commissioner Rusty Bell.

Commissioner Del Shelstad said he didn't like "one single word of the governor's new orders."

"Because you're mad and pissed off, I'm pissed off too," he told those in attendance. "I think it's government overreach at its finest."

On Nov. 17, the commissioners approved a mask mandate for county employees. Thursday, they rescinded that requirement because of the governor's statewide mandate. Shelstad was among those who supported the county's mask order, but since then he's advocated for changing the language from a requirement to a recommendation.

'Are there risks? Of course'

Residents, none of whom were wearing masks but were spaced 6 feet apart in the commissioners' chambers, were upset about the orders, calling them unconstitutional and an example of government overreach. Some expressed skepticism

over the effectiveness of masks.

"We are very concerned, and we will not comply with the government telling us what to do," said Vicki Kissack, who was speaking as a county resident and not as the chairman of the Campbell County GOP.

Barb Luthy called the orders "arbitrary and capricious" and that they don't make common sense. She asked commissioners to write a letter to the governor, outlining their concerns.

Sage Bear said that if the economy hadn't been shut down during the first few months of the pandemic, people would be spending money and businesses would be thriving right now, and the state might have even attracted new businesses.

"Instead, we continue to marginalize individuals, confine them and shame them into wearing masks that take away identity and expression," she said.

Bear proposed that the county "go back to normal."

"Are there risks? Of course. Might our hospital get overrun? Perhaps," she said.

But people are aware of the risks, and it is the people, not the government, who have the freedom to decide what they want to do, Bear said.

Susan Sisti and her husband

Ed had COVID in the second half of October. During that time, she did a lot of research on the pandemic. She said her doctor told her 70% of COVID patients were wearing masks, and "the masks may actually cause you to be more susceptible."

"We talked to an ER doctor recently, and he says there's no science behind anything. We're just all confused," Sisti said.

And Jason McJilton accused the government and media of lying about the pandemic "since Day One," saying that no one knows how many have actually died from COVID-19.

"You'll never get the true numbers when you monetize a virus," he said.

He called the CARES Act a "\$2.2 trillion unconstitutional taxpayer sponsored disaster, created by incompetent public servants that failed the American people," and that the government is pushing for broadband expansion to "increase internet to keep the peasants away from each other."

"What's next? Forced vaccinations? Papers to get food and supplies?" he asked.

A medical conspiracy?

Some asked if the county was going to enforce the mandate. Bell said the "enforcement of this is almost impossible," and

that there won't be officers knocking on doors, checking to see how many people are at a Christmas gathering.

"You shouldn't be punished for having a big family," he said.

Rep. Scott Clem, R-Gillette, said the orders are unconstitutional, and "it's never wrong to not obey an unlawful order."

He suggested that the county sue the state government.

"How much more do we have to be pushed and aggravated and have their rights stripped away?" Clem asked. "How much do we have to be pushed before someone does anything?"

As the county's elected leaders, it is the commissioners' responsibility to "push back," Clem added.

The commissioners did not make a decision on whether to sue the state. Bell said he's concerned a lawsuit would put a target on Campbell County's back.

"This needs to be challenged. Someone's got to challenge it. Someone's got to. And I'm suggesting it should be you," Clem said.

Representative-elect Bill Fortner, R-Gillette, said there was "no common sense" in the orders, and suspects they're an act of desperation.

If Biden becomes president and asks the country to go

under a mask mandate, "I think there might be government funding tied to those mandates," he said.

"I think that's what the governor is setting us up for," he added.

Shelstad was quarantined with COVID earlier this fall. He said the treatment for that was the same as for the flu.

"When I was a kid, if you got the flu you stayed home, you got chicken noodle soup, and you stayed away from grandma until you felt better. This is really no different," he said.

What's happening right now is politics and the medical community have "collude(d) against the people," he said, adding that the fear mongering needs to stop.

"I think we should stop testing for COVID," he said. "Testing for COVID does nothing but create mass hysteria."

Shelstad said it should be up to the people to decide what's right for themselves and how much risk they're willing to take.

He also said wearing a mask is "virtue signaling" and is ineffective.

"It is something that we do, sometimes to comply, sometimes because it's like putting a Band-aid on a cut," he said. "It covers it up but it doesn't change anything."

Wyo. won't join Texas election lawsuit

By NEWS RECORD STAFF

Gov. Mark Gordon has decided that Wyoming will not join a lawsuit filed by the Texas attorney general against key states that could invalidate Joe Biden's election to the presidency.

The governor said that to do so would interfere with those states' sovereignty.

Gordon faced intense pressure over the past day or two as attested by callers from Campbell County who wanted to encourage the governor and attorney general Bridget Hill to join the lawsuit. Sixteen other states have done so.

Texas seeks to ask the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn the election results in Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

"President Trump has the right to bring electoral issues for resolution in the U.S. judicial system," said Gordon, pointing out that he and Wyoming "overwhelmingly supported

President Trump through our electoral process."

"We were not informed nor asked by Texas to consider joining their suit," Gordon said.

"The state of Texas's filing was more than 150 pages and there was inadequate time to properly consider the ramifications of joining the motion specifically, or to thoughtfully consider joining the supporting states' brief before it was filed."

He said he asked Hill to look into the case and consider possible actions that Wyoming might take.

"(Attorney) General Hill did this, and after significant consideration we believe that the case could have unintended consequences relating to a constitutional principle that the state of Wyoming holds dear — that states are sovereign, free to govern themselves," Gordon said in a press release.

"Should the Supreme Court grant Texas's motion, we will weigh in a manner that is suit-

able and appropriate for the issues raised. As always, I will make sure Wyoming's interests are protected," he added.

The press release included a statement from Wyoming Secretary of State Ed Buchanan:

"I support the state of Texas in its quest to ensure that elections are conducted in accordance with the constitution and state law. Our judiciary is the proper place to raise these issues."

Campbell County resident Don Wilson was one who tried to call the offices of Gordon and Hill to urge them to add Wyoming to the list of states challenging the vote in those four states.

"I don't trust this vote," Wilson said about the election outcome. "I think there were a lot of false votes in there. I just don't trust the vote."

Wyoming joining the lawsuit would be helpful in encouraging the Supreme Court to listen to the case, he said.

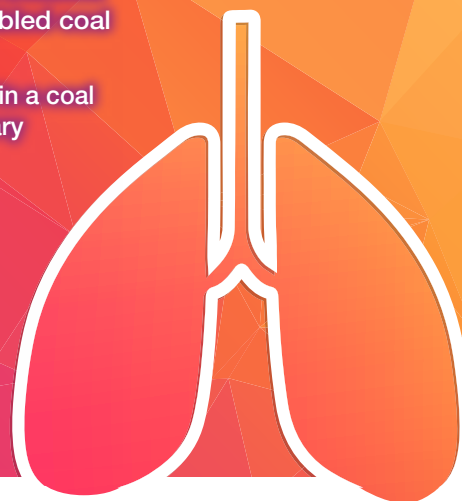
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