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# Opinions

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## Cuomo: Follow safety guides, or risk same fate as other states

As part of a Wednesday press conference, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said "I heard the president speak yesterday and what he was tweeting about today on schools. And look, this is getting a little old as far as I'm concerned. And I heard what the president said on schools, but this has been there, done that, right? School reopenings are a state decision, period. That is the law, and that is the way we're going to proceed. It's not up to the president of the United States. There is something called the Constitution that guides government power, and then there are a series of laws that are based on that Constitution. And the president does not have the authority to open schools.

"We will open the schools if it is safe to open the schools. Everybody wants the schools open - everybody. Nobody wants the schools open more than I do. School reopening also ties to the economic reopening, right? Because you can't really reopen the economy fully if you have the schools closed. Schools are important, not just for education, socialization of young people; we don't even know what this means to have kids who are out of school for this period of time. So, yes, we all want to open schools. But we want it to be safe. And the test that I bring to all of these things, day camps, overnight camps, is the my child test. I am not going to ask anyone to put their child in a situation that I would not put my child in, and that's how I make these decisions. If it's not safe for my child, it's not safe for your child. So, we'll get the data and we'll make that decision in August. But just to be clear, the federal government has no legal authority when it comes to school openings.

"And this is just a redux of what the president did on the economic reopening. If you remember, he didn't want to have anything to do with the closing of the economies, he said the governors should do that, governors will decide if an economy closes. But then the president declared, 'I have the authority to reopen the economies and I'm going to order a reopening of the economies.' No, not true Mr. president. It's not what the Constitution says. I made that point and then the president said, 'OK, it's not up to me. It's up to the governors.' The same is true on education. He wants the schools reopened. It's not up to him. It's not up to him. It's not his legal authority, just like it was not his legal authority to say he's going to decide when the economy reopens in this



state. And this is a redux because he poses a false choice, and that he's posed the false choice that is one of the reasons this nation is now in the situation that it's in.

"On the economy he said, it's a choice between the economy and public health and he chose the economy and said to states all across this nation, 'Reopen the economy right away. We have to get the economy running and that's what we have to do.' It was never a choice between reopen the economy or take care of public health. It was never a choice between reopen the economy or have more Americans die. That was never the choice. And the states that made that choice are the states that are now suffering. It was, 'Of course reopen. But reopen the economy and be smart about the way you re opening.' It wasn't binary. It wasn't just open the floodgates. Everybody go out. No precautions, no data, no monitoring and then you're shocked when you see the infection rate coming through the roof? Everybody warned him. Everyone said, 'If you just reopen, you're going to drive that infection rate up and then it's actually going to hurt the economy.' And that is what happened.

"His premise is now the same thing with the schools. 'Open those schools. Open those doors.' His own CDC puts out guidance on a semi-intelligent way to reopen the schools. He then says, 'Don't listen to the CDC. I disagree with them.' Oh really? Do you know, Mr. president, better than your health experts how to protect the health of students? Do you really want to disregard children's safety? Do you really mean that when you say that? And it's not a choice of open the schools or not open the schools. Of course, open the schools. Just like everybody wanted to open the economy, but be

smart about it. Look at the health guidance. Make sure children are protected, have precautions, do the testing, monitor what happens. This has been the story throughout this COVID crisis.

"New York has proven what works. There's no theory here. There's 19 million people. We had the worst situation on the globe and we took certain steps and we know what works because it has been proven in the laboratory called New York and you cannot deny the results. Testing worked. How did we get into a situation where these other states don't have testing in place? It's been seven months. Seven months we've been talking about this. And you have states where people are waiting on line for eight hours, lines miles long to get tested. We talked about overwhelming the hospital capacity. We talked about ventilators. We talked about emergency hospital beds. We talked about that when this first started and now you have states that are saying their ICU beds are filled. Yes, if the infection rate goes through the roof you're going to overwhelm your hospital system. We talked about this months ago. We talked about having contact tracing in place and now there's states saying they don't have contact tracing in place; they can't get it together. States are running out of PPE. We talked about PPE six months and planes going to China to pick up masks. We talked about having a phased reopening based on data, monitor, and when you see the data says it's safe, open up a little bit more, do the calibration. And we talked about masks. New York state, first state in the United States to mandate masks.

"Look at the numbers. The projection model that the White

House uses, the Gates-funded IMHE model, shows extrapolating from this now increased infection rate an additional 15,000 Americans die by October. An additional 15,000 Americans die than they had projected. Well what changed? The spike in the infection rate changed, so when they extrapolate out based on the infection rate increase, another 15,000 Americans die.

"Wear a mask. IMHE says 45,000 more people will die if they don't wear masks. Think about this. If a mask order is not in place, 45,000 more deaths. You're not going to save everyone's life, I get it. I've struggled with it for 130 days, but how can you (lose) a life when it was totally preventable? Totally preventable. All you had to do was have a mask policy and you save 45,000 people's lives. Why on God's green earth wouldn't you have a mask policy when they are telling you that it works? And that if you don't do it 45,000 more people will die? What has happened to basic common sense in our government leaders? Why wouldn't you? What is it, hubris? That you were against masks and you made them a political symbol? So now you're going to let 45,000 more people die?

"Look, leadership starts at the top. Sign an executive order, wear a mask, follow the science, follow the data. Stop dividing people. Stop playing politics. Inspire the nation to act as one. I wear a mask for you; you wear a mask for me. That's what you're supposed to do as president, that's what you're supposed to do as a leader. This is not about politics. It's not about who gets elected and who doesn't get elected. This is far more important, this point in history. When they look back at this point in history the decisions we make will determine how many people live and how many people die. That is not being overly dramatic and that's not being rhetorical. These decisions decide how many people live and how many people die. Period.

"That's why this is more important than any other time that I have been in public service in any other position. Never was it as clear the consequence of government's actions. Never was it as clear how important government is and public service is and the decisions that are made. You're talking about thousands of people's lives. Tens of thousands of lives. That's why I thank God we're in a state that is New York tough and smart and united and disciplined and loving."

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