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The States of America aren't united until we all wear a mask

By: Doug Parker

The United States of America. United is in the name, yet depending on which state residents are in, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic isn't so unified.

New York, which was once the epicenter for COVID-19 in the United States, listened to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other experts' guidelines to keep people at home and wearing a mask while out. New York has gotten its cases under control and still requires masks to keep the spread of the virus at bay.

However, in states like Florida where cases did not spike until the reopening, COVID-19 cases are at an all-time high. There are no mask ordinances nor much following of CDC recommendations in these states.

How can two states in the same country have such vastly different requirements during a deadly pandemic?

The answer is simple: there is no current federally mandated mask ordinance and a generally underwhelming federal response to the virus. Compared to other countries whose national guidelines have brought the pandemic under control, the United States' federal response has fallen short.

As long as each state has its own rules on wearing masks, the virus will continue to spread uncontrollably across the country, and many more people will die. In the United States, more than [140,000](#) people have died from the virus to date. This number will rise as Americans travel across the country between places with different mask recommendations.

Because American Airlines transports people between hundreds of cities, it endorses a national mask ordinance to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

American Airlines' mission is to get its passengers to their destinations safely, including protection from COVID-19. Flight attendants, pilots, team members and crew must wear masks while flying and in airports, as well as between flights, even when states do not require masks.

By wearing a mask and following all other CDC recommendations, residents will together limit the spread of the virus, allowing for further reopening of the United States. When cases decrease, American Airlines can provide more flights to make traveling easier for everyone, but this cannot happen without a national mask ordinance in place.

Wearing a [mask](#) is the most effective way to reduce the spread of COVID-19 next to isolation. Masks help with [source control](#), which reduces the risk of virus-containing droplets from spreading between people when they talk, sneeze and cough.

It neither matters the status nor role of anyone; the safety of everyone in the country is dependent on everyone wearing a mask, and that is why American Airlines supports a national mandate requiring masks.

Across the world, nearly every country has faced the pandemic, and many have successfully controlled the spread of COVID-19 by following the recommendations of experts. Italy showed the first explosion of cases outside of China, but with strict measures and a national mask requirement, it has been able to [flatten the curve](#) significantly. Italy's trial and error goes to show how the curve can only flatten with a unified national response.

With national unity on wearing masks, COVID-19 can be controlled [within weeks](#). Masks should not be optional nor should wearing them be up to the states to decide. As one country with residents who can freely travel across state lines, the safety of all Americans is reliant on every American wearing a mask.

Many Americans pride themselves on living in a free country, but nobody will ever be free if the country is riddled with COVID-19. The lives of all residents in the United States are not disposable and should not be subject to sickness and death because of politics.

Some opposition to a national mask ordinance comes in the question of states' rights. In the United States, each state reserves the right to govern when the power has not been explicitly given to the federal government.

To combat this, all states must band together and be united in enforcing masks with their own individual ordinances while following national guidelines. In the Northeast, [several states](#) banded together in March to create a unified COVID-19 response. Every state can do this. However, a national ordinance would not be in place to potentially defy any law but to instead get the United States' COVID-19 outbreak under control, saving lives.

American Airlines recommends either an executive order or legislation passed through Congress be signed for a national mask ordinance. Individuals should always wear a mask, regardless of local mandates, but a national mandate will make the country safer. By calling representatives, making noise and signing petitions, residents of the United States can stand up for safety and push for a federal response.

In addition to the need for a national mask ordinance, masks should be readily available to everyone. Companies, like American Airlines, should step up to help provide masks to the communities they serve. In Texas and Florida, American Airlines employees have stepped up to [make and distribute masks](#) within some highly impacted areas, and American Airlines will continue to support these gracious employees to help them help the country.

A national mask ordinance is common sense. It has worked in other countries and individual states, and it will work in the United States. Without a mask mandate, the lives of our friends, our family members and ourselves are at stake. Americans should not stop until they know they can be free by a united mask policy.

Doug Parker is the American Airlines' CEO. He began working at American Airlines in 1986 as a financial advisor and became CEO in September 2001.

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