

August 30, 2021

Negotiating the Next Stage of COVID-19

Just about 4 months ago (April 22, 2021), your blogger (YB) asked (rhetorically) how much longer we would need masks? He noted that early estimates of requisite vaccination rates for herd immunity of 70% had given way to target rates closer to 90%. He also noted that we had picked a lot of the “low-hanging” fruit for vaccination and that who wanted vaccinations, frustrated early in this 2021 year, could now able get the vaccinations that they sought. He predicted that the “vaxers” would probably be fully vaccinated by July or August. It is the end of August, and YB was about right.

It is the end of August and where do we stand?

- Apple Computer was going to bring their employees back to the offices in September, and then October ... and now January 2022.
- Despite the best efforts of Governor DeSantis of Florida to make schools normal [to him], the largest Florida school districts defied his ban on mask mandates, took him to court, and (thus far) have won.
- As the Jewish New Year approaches in early September, many synagogues that have longed to have “traditional” services, are requiring masks for those who enter, socially distancing participants, and providing “live streaming” for a second year.
- The New York Philharmonic Orchestra is reopening with these [restrictions](#):
 - All audience members will be required to show proof of vaccination against COVID-19 with a vaccine authorized by the World Health Organization or the Food and Drug Administration.
 - As of August 9, all guests attending Philharmonic performances must maintain appropriate face coverings in accordance with current CDC guidelines.
- (Very) many large universities, including those in states that have forbidden them, have enacted vaccine and mask mandates, and (very) frequent COVID-19 testing for those who are unvaccinated.
- Maureen Dowd writes ([today](#), August 30) “thanks to the insidious Delta variant, *The [New York] Times* has not set an official date for a return. I will have to wait still longer to be reunited with the part of me that I left at the office.”

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Understand this, please. These are not federal mandates. These are the businesses, universities, arts associations, religious organizations, and local schools that have looked carefully at the evidence and are simply not prepared to reestablish business as usual.

Where is the “economics” in all this. Through processes of terribly messy negotiation among hundreds if not thousands of economic “agents”, we are bumping along and trying to make a set of rules to make the economy work again. For now, the rules include major use of vaccine and mask mandates.

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