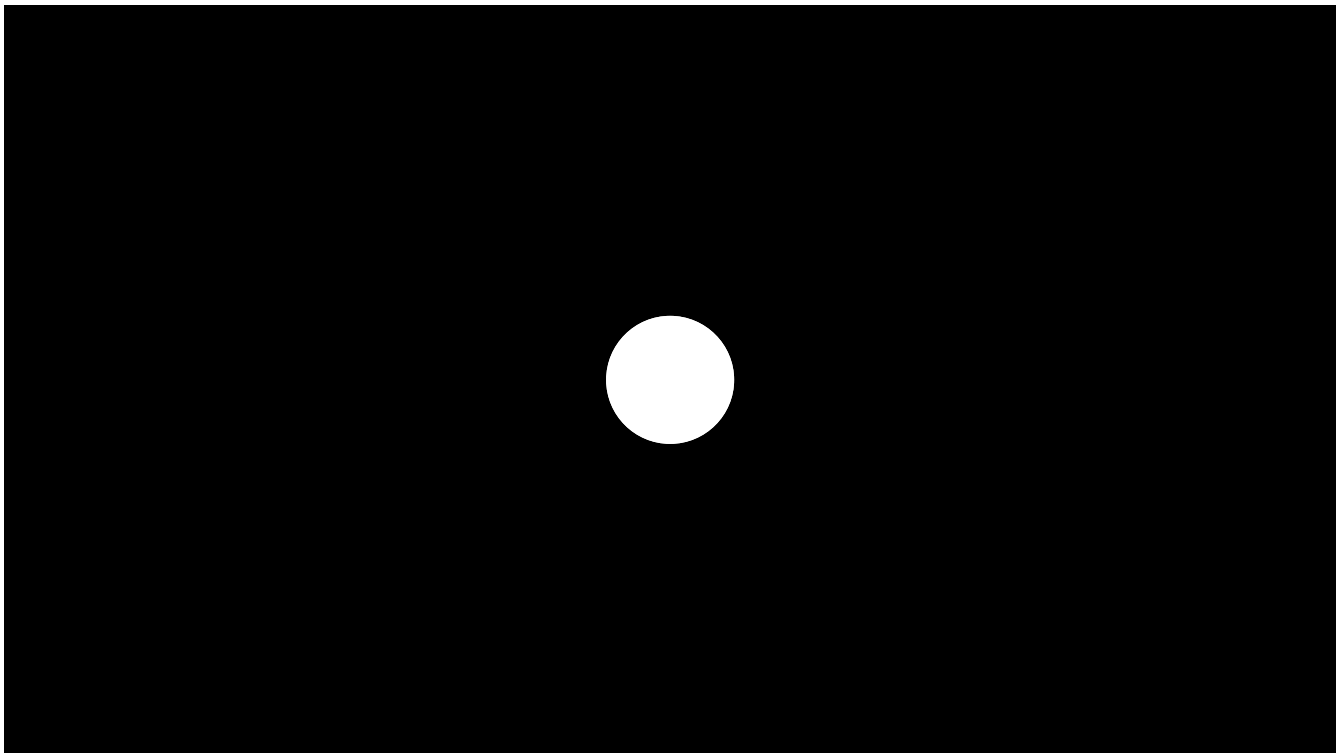


Lawsuit seeks to halt Biden's vaccination mandates for federal workforce

A group of lawsuit plaintiffs, including four Air Force officers and a Secret Service agent, have asked a federal court to block the Biden administration's [coronavirus](#) vaccination mandates, declaring, "Americans have remained idle for far too long as our nation's elected officials continue to satisfy their voracious appetites for power."



How mRNA helped scientists create a covid-19 vaccine in record time

The lawsuit, filed Sept. 23 in U.S. District Court in Washington, seeks an injunction that would halt vaccination requirements announced recently for millions of workers in federal executive-branch agencies, including contractors, as well as U.S. troops.

Although people with legitimate religious or medical objections are exempt

from the immunization policies, officials said, the 10 plaintiffs allege that the mandates, enacted by President Biden and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, violate the First Amendment's guarantee of religious freedom and are prohibited by federal laws.

Besides its constitutional and statutory claims, the lawsuit, prepared by attorneys in Virginia and San Diego, contains vituperative language for a legal filing, citing the administration's "authoritarian grip" on the nation and the country's "forty-seven year subjugation" to Biden's "vapid political career."

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The Defense Department declined to comment and has not yet responded to the lawsuit in court.

Since Aug. 23, when the Food and Drug Administration [gave full approval](#) to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, Biden has escalated pressure on unvaccinated Americans as the highly contagious delta variant of the coronavirus spreads.

"If you're one of the millions of Americans who said that they will not get the shot ... until it has full and final approval of the FDA, it has now happened," the president said after the Aug. 23 Pfizer announcement. He added pointedly: "We've been patient, but our patience is wearing thin. ... Your refusal has cost all of us."

As for the two other vaccines that also received emergency use authorization from the FDA last year, Moderna has applied for full approval for its vaccine and Johnson & Johnson has said it expects to seek full approval in coming months.

On Sept. 9, Biden [signed orders](#) requiring executive-branch employees and contractors to get vaccinated. He also ordered businesses employing more than 100 people to require immunizations or weekly testing for workers. Unlike his mandate for industry, his policy for the federal government does

not include a testing option.

At the Pentagon, Austin [enacted the vaccination mandate](#) for the nation's 1.3 million active-duty service members immediately after the Pfizer final approval.

In addition to Secret Service Agent Lionel Klein, based in Brooklyn, and the Air Force officers (a major, two captains and a lieutenant), the lawsuit plaintiffs include a Border Patrol agent, three employees of federal contractors, and Daniel Jackson, a State Department Foreign Service officer.

Some, including Jackson, said they oppose vaccinations for religious reasons; some cited histories of adverse physical reactions to immunizations; and some, like Klein, said they already had covid-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus, and have been told by physicians that they are now immune.

The plaintiffs say they can lawfully refuse to be immunized with a vaccine that has not gained final approval. They also attack the FDA approval process, saying the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine that millions of Americans received under the emergency authorization is chemically different from the vaccine approved in August. Federal officials have said the formulation is the same and the two are interchangeable.

"There is perhaps no greater usurpation of fundamental constitutional rights than forcibly injecting a foreign substance into an American citizen," the plaintiffs' attorneys wrote. "The rights of our nation's most heinous convicted serial killers who have been sentenced to death receive more respect than this."

The Pentagon also has declined to comment on other lawsuits by service members, including a case filed in August in Colorado that demanded the Defense Department create vaccine requirement exemptions for troops who have antibodies from previous infections.

The new lawsuit comes as the individual service branches approach deadlines for troops to get vaccinated or face possible punishment. The four Air Force officers in the case, described as being on active duty, would be required to be vaccinated by Nov. 2, according to service-specific guidelines.

The Air Force has the most aggressive timeline for immunizations. The Navy and Marine Corps require vaccinations by the end of November and the Army by mid-December.

Meanwhile, within the Secret Service, anger about the vaccination requirement has been roiling agents and uniformed officers, many of whom are conservative-leaning and opposed to Biden's policies generally. Many of them are openly cheering for Klein, who until recently was a member of former president Bill Clinton's protection detail.

Carol D. Leonnig, Annie Linskey and Alice Crites contributed to this report.



© Evelyn Hockstein/Reuters President Biden answers a reporter's question after speaking about the coronavirus vaccines and booster shots on Sept. 24.



© Emily Elconin/Reuters A patient receives a coronavirus booster shot Sept. 29 in Southfield, Mich.