



OPINION *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

Getting a COVID-19 vaccination is a patriotic act. Do it for your family and for America.

We must stand together to promote vaccinations so we can save lives and finally get beyond this pandemic.

Bill Foster and Mariannette Miller-Meeks Opinion contributors

Published 6:03 a.m. ET Jul. 1, 2021

Throughout our history, Americans have put aside their partisan differences and stood together in times of crisis. It is time for us to stand together again.

For the past 16 months, the American people have confronted an enemy unlike any in our lifetimes. The coronavirus pandemic has threatened Americans in every community around the country. It has disrupted our daily routines, ravaged our economy and taken far too many lives.

Thanks to the scientists engaged in Operation Warp Speed and many others, lifesaving vaccines are widely available and the end of our struggle is, at last, coming into view.

As members of the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis – and as a scientist and a physician by training – we agree on the most important step forward. At this critical moment, to finally overcome the virus and avoid continued outbreaks, more Americans need to get vaccinated.

USA TODAY's opinion newsletter: Get the best insights and analysis delivered to your inbox.

For that to happen, we must stand together to confront and reduce vaccine hesitancy.

The vaccines are working. With 155 million Americans fully vaccinated and 181 million Americans who have received their first shot, hospitalizations, infections and deaths have plummeted.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the seven-day average of deaths due to the coronavirus is 287. This is in stark contrast from the height of the pandemic when we lost an average of 3,500 Americans per day.

Vaccinations have been key to facilitating swift and safe progress toward a full return to our normal lives. As vaccination rates have increased, states, cities and towns have reopened and families and communities are finally able to safely come together across our nation.

This progress is a testament to the vaccines' efficacy and the hard work of scientists who developed them under extraordinary circumstances.

However, we cannot lose sight of the work that remains to be done. Even though thousands of Americans are still getting sick from the coronavirus each day, 1 in 5 Americans say they will not get a coronavirus vaccine.

Thousands of vaccine doses will expire because too many Americans who have yet to be vaccinated aren't coming forward to get shots.

The choice to get vaccinated is personal, but the consequences are national. Continued vaccine hesitancy threatens to reverse the progress we have made, particularly as more contagious and severe variants like the delta variant emerge.

Delta variant heightens danger

The delta variant is spreading rapidly throughout the United States and now accounts for more than 25% of new coronavirus cases. In countries like the United Kingdom, where the delta variant has become dominant, cases are rising.

A higher number of unvaccinated people increases the risk of a worst-case scenario in which a variant emerges that can infect and kill those who have already been vaccinated. We must stand together to promote vaccinations so we can save lives and finally get beyond this pandemic.

The three vaccines are based on decades of rigorous research and large clinical trials, and have few side effects. The long-term side effects of COVID-19 infection are far worse than any from the vaccines.

Vaccination helps protect your family

Additionally, getting the vaccine dramatically lowers your chances of spreading this deadly virus to your loved ones. Getting vaccinated will get us all closer to a return to normal.

You, your neighbors, and your friends and family can feel comfortable getting your shots. Coronavirus vaccines were developed from more than a decade of research and development and went through the same layers of review, testing and safety monitoring as other vaccines. They are safe and will help us defeat our common enemy.

Getting your shot is not a partisan act; it is a patriotic act. There is no time to waste. We encourage everyone to get vaccinated today.

To find a vaccine distribution site near you, visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).

Reps. Bill Foster, D-Ill., and Mariannette Miller-Meeks, R-Iowa, are members of the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis.