



Huntington Beach Becoming Symbol Of ‘We Will Not Comply’

Although this article is highly critical of “mask doubters”, the fact remains that Huntington Beach residents are in disbelief and fed up with coronavirus panic measures. The attitude is spreading throughout Orange County, which is traditionally more conservative than other parts of California. □ TN Editor

As Brad Colburn whisked his metal detector over the tan sands of Huntington Beach, a rejection of [Orange County's spiking coronavirus](#) infection rates surfaced.

“I don’t believe it. I don’t believe the rates are rising,” Colburn said. “They’re inflated. It’s another way of shutting everything down ... of the Democrats trying to get what they want.”

The 58-year-old Huntington Beach resident said he has yet to wear a mask outside of shopping. Standing by a beach path as cyclists and in-line skaters zoomed by, he offered his own alternative policy to restrictive coronavirus health orders.

“If you don’t want to go outside, don’t go outside,” Colburn said.

More than any other place in California, Huntington Beach has come to symbolize resistance to many of the coronavirus safety rules government officials have imposed in recent months. It’s not as though no one in the city is wearing masks and social distancing.

But many who oppose mandatory mask rules and other measures like closing beaches have been outspoken here, and used the tourist mecca as a platform for their views. In May, [angry demonstrators converged](#) a block away at the now mostly quiet Huntington Beach Pier to protest the state-ordered shutdown of local businesses.

Since then, many roaming through the city’s downtown area are proudly not wearing masks. And the stance has even inspired a parody video that went viral on social media in recent weeks.

Fred Smoller, a professor of political science at nearby Chapman University, described Huntington Beach as a conservative stronghold and said that the attitudes about the coronavirus there reflect larger political divides.

“Their ideology is a lens through which they are viewing the coronavirus,” Smoller said. “I would imagine many people there see it as a hoax, which the president has encouraged them to do in order to up his chance of reelection. I’m sure there’s quite a bit of animus toward the governor.... They’re viewing [state restrictions] as further evidence of the deep state and of an intrusive government.”

Huntington Beach Mayor Lyn Semeta said the city would continue its educational efforts to keep residents safe. Masks, she said in an email statement to The Times, are “critical in keeping people healthy and helping our businesses operate safely in the limited capacity they are able to.”

When asked about opposition to COVID-19 restrictions in Huntington Beach, Semeta said she was aware people around the state are “uncomfortable with the use of face coverings.”

“I can certainly understand that sentiment. However, while there is still much we are learning about this virus, health experts have come out strongly recommending face coverings as an effective measure that helps stop the spread of COVID-19,” Semeta said, urging residents to wear them.

The number of Orange County coronavirus cases has surged in recent weeks, with more than 31,000 confirmed cases and more than 500 deaths. The number of hospitalizations has tripled in the last two months and overall infections have grown so dramatically that the county is now second in the state to Los Angeles County.

There is widespread acceptance that masks play a key role in slowing the spread of the coronavirus, and their widespread use in other countries is credited with slowing infections dramatically.

But skepticism abounds over the seriousness of the outbreak.

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