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Hello Sublette County, this is Albert Sommers reporting to you on national policies coming from President Biden that will affect Wyoming citizens.

On Thursday, September 9, President Biden ordered sweeping new federal vaccine mandates on nearly 100 million Americans. His order requires all employers with more than 100 workers to demand their employees either get vaccinated or be tested for COVID-19 once a week. Further, President Biden is requiring all health facility workers be vaccinated in order for that facility to be eligible to receive federal Medicare and Medicaid payments. Most nursing homes, hospitals, and clinics in Wyoming are heavily dependent upon these federal funds, as they serve populations eligible for Medicare and Medicaid.

Governor Gordon issued a fast and appropriate response to President Biden's edict: *"The Biden Administration's announcement to mandate COVID-19 vaccinations or weekly testing for private businesses is an egregious example of big government overreach. Our Constitution was written and fought for to protect our liberties as American citizens. This administration's latest pronouncement demonstrates its complete disregard for the rule of law and the freedoms individuals and private companies enjoy under our Constitution. In Wyoming, we believe that government must be held in check. I have asked the Attorney General to stand prepared to take all actions to oppose this administration's unconstitutional overreach of executive power. It has no place in America. Not now, and not ever."*

Governor Gordon can take this fight to the federal government, and the Wyoming Legislature can support his efforts primarily by funding that effort. Republican Leadership of the Wyoming Legislature issued a press release on Friday, September 10: *"We stand in strong support of Governor Gordon's stance against a federal vaccine mandate. Our republican form of government leaves decisions of this gravity to the states. We believe the Biden Administration's federal vaccine requirement is arbitrary and likely unconstitutional. The Governor and the Attorney General are provided the tools through Wyoming Statute 9-14-102 to take legal action to prevent the enforcement of overreaching Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations such as the proposed vaccine mandate. We are confident they will*

*use that authority to good effect to protect the rights of Wyoming citizens.”* As a member of legislative leadership, my name is on this response.

I do not support vaccine mandates for COVID. That decision is best left to the individual.

However, I also struggle with government telling a private business that it cannot require employees to follow health care guidelines, to have a healthy work environment.

The 100% free market approach says that workers have a choice who they work for, and if an employer makes requirements that employees do not like, then the employer will have no employees. However, challenges arise to the free-market concept when a business has a monopoly in a community and workers have few choices for decent alternate jobs, or when customers or workers are being harmed by business practices.

Moreover, if Wyoming passes a law forbidding private business from imposing vaccine mandates on employees, while the federal government imposes regulations forcing businesses to impose vaccine mandates on employees, it puts a business between a rock and hard spot.

Vaccine mandates will continue to be a hotly debated issue as Wyoming decides how to thread the needle, protecting the rights of workers, consumers, and private businesses. The Governor will likely call the Legislature into a special session to address Biden’s vaccine mandates, and the Legislature is examining avenues to push back against this federal overreach, while protecting the rights of workers and businesses. Stay tuned, more to come.

I can be reached with questions or concerns at [albert@albertsommers.com](mailto:albert@albertsommers.com)