

# BLUE AND RED STATES VARY ON COVID-19 POLICIES

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on how Republican and Democrat states differ in their coronavirus response:

Last month, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo spoke for many Blue state Democrats when he cautioned about reopening the economy too quickly, noting that to do so would jeopardize the public health. He was emphatic, insisting that “every life is priceless. Period.”

Pro-life Americans weren’t buying it. Cuomo is so radical in his defense of abortion—for any reason and at any time of gestation—that he even defends infanticide: the “former altar boy,” as he likes to describe himself, says it is perfectly legal for medical personnel not to save the life of a baby struggling to stay alive as a result of a botched abortion. Ergo, not every life is priceless.

It is striking to note that of the three states that included specific abortion protections in their COVID-19 policies, two of them, New Jersey and Virginia, were among the last to end their stay-at-home restrictions; they did so on June 9 and June 10, respectively. The governors did not explain why their interest in public health, and their determination to prolong the shutdown, made an exception for their abortion clinics. But we all know why.

Twelve states attempted to block elective abortions as non-essential services in their COVID-19 policies. Ten of them have Red state Republican governors and Republican majorities in both chambers of the legislature. Two are mixed, having Republican legislative majorities and Democrat governors. None are Blue states; they are run by Democrats in the executive

and legislative branches.

Of these 12 pro-life states, most were among the first to reopen. Three of them, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Iowa, never had a stay-at-home order. Six others—Alabama, Alaska, Texas, Tennessee, West Virginia and Mississippi—were among the earliest to reopen; they did so at the end of April and the beginning of May.

The pattern is obvious: Blue states, which made sure abortions could be performed during the shutdown, lagged behind the pro-life Red states in reopening.

Some might conclude that the Blue states, aside from not protecting the life of the unborn, still have a better record than the Red states when it comes to maximizing public health: their decision not to reopen too quickly showed how concerned they are about the need for social distancing during the pandemic.

This argument, however, is seriously undercut by the willingness of Blue state mayors and governors to throw their concern for social distancing to the wind when they allowed thousands of protesters to take to the streets in their locales. These executives were far more determined to stop a handful of the faithful from assembling in their houses of worship than they were to stop throngs of young people from protesting: social distancing norms were violated with impunity in one Blue state after another. Moreover, their passivity in reining in the most violent of the protesters makes ludicrous their concern for public health and safety.

Ideally, politics should play no role in a pandemic. That it has is glaringly obvious.