

## CENSORSHIP

# Los Angeles County Public Health versus free speech

During a recent deposition in a lawsuit brought by Los Angeles parents, L.A. County Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer swore to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.



**Susan Shelley**  
Columnist

She wasn't under oath for the last three years, as she fed statements and statistics to the public about

COVID-19 and the measures that supposedly would prevent infection.

Now we know that the department counted positive tests of asymptomatic people as "cases," without acknowledging the existence of false positives, and they counted deaths as "due to" COVID based on a definition that an Atlanta-based epidemiologists' group created to measure "associated" pandemic deaths based on geographic region, possibly similar symptoms, and guesswork.

Ferrer was deposed in the lawsuit filed by the Alliance of Los Angeles County Parents against the L.A. County Department of Public Health, County Health Officer Muntu Davis, and Ferrer. The lawsuit was filed last July as Ferrer's department prepared to impose another countywide indoor mask mandate based on statistics of "cases" and some framework created by the Centers for Disease Control to categorize "community spread."

The hints and rumors of this impending mandate triggered fierce opposition as well as a lawsuit. KABC radio host and Southern California News Group columnist John Phillips was especially skeptical, deriding Ferrer as a "fake doctor" for putting herself forward as "Dr. Ferrer" on the subject of infectious disease transmission when she has no medical credentials at all. Ferrer has a Ph.D. from Brandeis University in social work.

During her deposition, she stated that she's not even completely clear on what her Ph.D. is in. "I'm not actually sure what it might say on the diploma," she testified, according to the rough transcript, "I was awarded that Ph.D.; I was part of a fellowship that actu-



DAMIAN DOVARGANES – THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Los Angeles County Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer takes questions at a news conference in Los Angeles.

ally was doing work on health policy."

At the time that Ferrer was threatening to impose another indoor mask mandate because the threat of COVID-19 infection was supposedly rising, highly credentialed people with medical training were disputing her assertions. At the county's largest public health hospital, chief medical officer Dr. Brad Spellberg and epidemiologist Dr. Paul Holtom stated at their weekly town hall meeting for employees that COVID cases were fewer and far less severe. This newspaper published an op-ed headlined "Bringing back a mask mandate in Los Angeles County is unjustified" authored by viral immunologist Dr. Scott Balsitis, USC professor of medicine Dr. Jeffrey Klausner, board-certified physician and pediatric clinical researcher Dr. Houman Hemmati and USC professor of health policy Dr. Neeraj Sood.

In the face of this torrent of opposition, discovery in the lawsuit has shown, the communications chief of the Department of Public Health, Brett Morrow, made the decision to cut off public comments on the social media accounts run by the department, allowing only comments from people who were "tagged" or men-

tioned. In addition, emails have revealed, Morrow reached out to the chief of staff of Rep. Adam Schiff, then the chair of the House Committee on Intelligence, and asked for his help to get Twitter to remove comments by John Phillips. The chief of staff, Patrick Boland, assisted Morrow in connecting with the "government" team at Twitter. All of this, supposedly, to prevent "misinformation."

The Alliance lawsuit initially brought five causes of action, per attorney Julie Hamill, seeking an end to "arbitrary and capricious" mandates that unfairly harm children in school. The judge in the case dismissed four of the causes of action on the grounds that the county's mandate could not be challenged as unreasonable because it was based on a CDC recommendation.

The trial is set for Oct. 16 on the remaining cause of action related to violation of free speech. Hamill said an appeal of the dismissal of the other causes of action will be filed as soon as the matter on trial is concluded.

Documents in the case may be read at [laparents.org](http://laparents.org).

Write [Susan@SusanShelley.com](mailto:Susan@SusanShelley.com) and follow her on Twitter @Susan\_Shelley