

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

DeSantis fiddles while elderly await turn

The COVID-19 vaccine waiting list grows longer as Gov. Ron DeSantis continues to mishandle the distribution efforts in Northwest Florida.

Our wellbeing is connected. Our health is linked to one another. When any one of us is barred from being able to gain access to the COVID vaccine, all of us are at risk.

Yet Gov. DeSantis continues to allow COVID-19 to destroy our economy and our way of life, by initially mishandling the pandemic response and now botching the vaccine rollout.

He told us that healthcare workers and people over the age of 65 would have access to the vaccine, yet our elderly report horror stories of month-long waiting lists, and appointments that are booked within minutes of the clinic opening. Our disabled veterans with co-morbidities still lack access to the vaccine simply because they are under the age of 65.

Why? Because a handful of our elected leaders are picking and choosing who gets access to the vaccine based on money, influence, and backroom deals. For example, after donating \$100,000 to DeSantis' politi-

cal committee, Publix was given a contract to distribute the vaccine.

Similarly, after reaching out to the developer of a well-to-do community in Manatee County, DeSantis worked with a county commissioner to set up vaccine sites in two of the county's wealthiest zip codes.

By allowing the corporations and lobbyists who fund his campaign to privatize vaccine distribution, DeSantis has left our elderly, disabled veterans, and Floridians under 65 unable to seek the care we need to turn our lives and our economy around. He knows that if he gets us to fight amongst ourselves over who should get the vaccine first, then we'll ignore the many missteps his administration has made over the last several months.

But we know better. We've seen this type of self-serving political tactic before. By pulling together, we can make sure that everyone gets access to the COVID vaccine if they want it.

We can choose leaders who will ensure that we get the care our families need to see us through this pandemic and build a stronger, healthier, and productive future. Our lives and our economy depend on it.

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