

ABC's *Good Morning America*

04/21/22

7:03:14 a.m.

13 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking Overnight; Justice Dept. Appeals Mask Mandate Ruling; CDC: Travel Requirement "Remains Necessary for the Public Health"]

MICHAEL STRAHAN: But we begin with the battle over masks. The Biden administration now saying it will appeal that judge's ruling voiding mandatory masks on planes and public transportation as COVID cases are rising in some regions and restrictions could return.

(...)

7:03:38 a.m.

1 minute and 41 seconds

CECILIA VEGA: The bottom line, if you are traveling right now and nothing is changing for you as far as masks go until a court weighs in. The CDC still says that wearing a mask is in the public health interest if you are on a plane, train, or a bus. This is optional, though, as this legal fight plays out. This morning, the Biden administration is appealing this week's court ruling that abruptly overturned the travel mask mandate. The Justice Department moving ahead with the appeal at the request of the CDC. The CDC concluding that requiring masks for travel "remains necessary for the public health" and that it's "well within the CDC's legal authority to protect public health."

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #1: I think it's really important that they actually appeal that ruling because I think it is important that we are able to switch back to wearing masks again if there is another big variant.

VEGA: The White House blindsided by the initial ruling. Officials now say the appeal isn't just about this pandemic. It's about setting precedent for the future and allowing the CDC to make public health decisions based on science.

JEN PSAKI [on 04/20/22]: The objective here is, of course, to appeal the 15-day extension, but also to preserve the CDC authority over the long term and we certainly want the CDC to continue to have this authority.

VEGA: News of the mask mandate being lifted this week was celebrated by some almost immediately.

[CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

AMY FEEHAN: It feels just almost surreal in a way to see, like, so many maskless people in one spot.

VEGA: Many ditching them on planes and public transit after the Trump-appointed Florida judge's ruling. But for others, concern and confusion as some airports like in Philadelphia, where passengers are still required to wear a mask.

(...)

7:05:27 a.m.

47 seconds

VEGA: This as COVID cases rise in some parts with subvariants of omicron spreading. Nationally, new infection rates growing by nearly 23 percent over the last week. The rise prompting New York's governor to announce she's keeping the mask mandate in place.

GOVERNOR KATHY HOCUL (D-NY): We're not panicking about this. We're not changing, but we also want to make sure we're smart about this.

VEGA: So, now, Americans wait as this legal fight could take weeks, it could take months. Experts believe it will likely make its way to the Supreme Court. But here's the catch. This is hardly a slam dunk for this administration. The Supreme Court has been skeptical of federal powers related to this pandemic, Robin, but, again right now, the advice from health officials is that it is in the public health interest to keep those masks on while you travel but it is optional this morning.

(...)

8:00:22 a.m. [TEASE]

11 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking Overnight; Mask Whiplash]

ROBIN ROBERTS: Breaking overnight, mask whiplash. The Justice Department appealing the ruling that overturned the travel mask mandate while new COVID infections rise in some parts of the country.

(...)

8:03:44 a.m.

33 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking Overnight; Justice Dept. Appeals Mask Mandate Ruling; CDC: Travel Requirement "Remains Necessary for the Public Health"]

VEGA: So the administration, they're fighting this one not just for this pandemic. They say this is about setting precedent for the future and allowing the CDC to make these public health decisions based on science but we've been talking about this. It's been so confusing for travelers.

Here's the bottom line if you are traveling right now. Nothing changes until a court weighs in. This could take weeks. It could take months. The CDC is saying it is still in the public health interest to keep those masks on if you're on a plane, a bus, a or train but that is optional while the legal fight plays out. Robin, this could go all the way to the Supreme Court.