

VACCINE POLICY ISSUES TO WATCH FOR IN 2023



On October 14, 2022, the [Texas Vaccine Policy Symposium](#) brought experts and stakeholders together at Baker Hall to discuss research on vaccine-related issues recently published by the Baker Institute. At the symposium, speakers presented their findings and the implications for immunization rates and vaccine access in Texas.

- Kirstin Matthews, a fellow in science and technology policy at the Baker Institute, [illustrated the rhetoric that witnesses at the 2021 state legislative session used to oppose immunizations and COVID-19 vaccine mandates](#). These witnesses often described their decisions as a personal choice in opposition to public health goals, noted perceived or hypothetical discrimination based on immunization status, and referred to scientific data, often incorrectly, to justify their positions.
- Rice University graduate student Adam Navara presented research on [issues and concerns related to the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in 2021](#). The researchers uncovered major issues with ImmTrac2, Texas' current immunization registry, and recommended that it be changed from an opt-in system to an opt-out one.
- Heidi Russell, professor of management, policy and community health at The University of Texas School of Public Health, presented an [economic model to analyze the impact of changes in vaccination rates on the Texas state budget, using measles as a case study](#). When the vaccination rate is lower, she found, measles outbreaks cost the state up to \$470 million in medical and public health-related expenses.
- Rekha Lakshmanan, a Baker Institute nonresident scholar, highlighted [how vaccine policies that first gain momentum in Texas often spread to other states](#). She expressed concern that the Texas Legislature could weaken school immunization programs, limit employer vaccine requirements, constrain the use of emergency use authorizations (EUAs), limit vaccine research and redefine discrimination classes to include the unvaccinated.
- Valerie Gutmann Koch, an assistant professor at the University of Houston Law Center, [presented a legal analysis of state laws that would extend antidiscrimination protections to those who choose not to be vaccinated](#). Such legislation would equate unvaccinated individuals with those who have been historically disadvantaged and are currently protected by federal and state civil rights laws — and could undermine existing antidiscrimination legislation.

For more information on vaccines, visit the Vaccines Cause Adults page at: bakerinstitute.org/vaccines-cause-adults.

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