



Infectious Diseases Society of America  
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## Anti Vaccine Legislation Primer

Federal level government agencies and legislators of both parties remain generally very supportive of vaccination.

Unfortunately, pressure from anti-vaccine advocates on state and local politicians has been quite effective at generating anti-vaccine legislation in many states. This document contains several examples of the types anti-vaccine bills most commonly pursued at the state level.

IDSA represents over 11,000 infectious diseases physicians and scientists devoted to patient care, disease prevention, public health, education, and research in the area of infectious diseases. Our members care for patients of all ages with serious infections, including meningitis, pneumonia, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections such as those caused by methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE), and Gram-negative bacterial infections such as *Acinetobacter baumannii*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, emerging infections such as Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), Enterovirus D68, and Ebola, and bacteria containing novel resistance mechanisms such as the New Delhi metallo-beta-lactamase (NDM) enzymes and others that make them resistant to a broad range of antibacterial drugs, including one of our most powerful classes of antibiotics, the carbapenems (carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae, or CRE).

### Exemption broadening bills

IDSA believes that medical contraindications should be the only basis for exempting a child from vaccination requirements. Many states already allow religious exemptions as well, and anti-vaccine advocates have already been successful in passing laws in several states that allow philosophical exemptions. These exemptions allow parents to refuse vaccinations for their child for any reason and are extremely harmful to individual and public health.

### Informed consent laws

Vaccinating children according to ACIP guidelines remains the default decision for a large majority of parents and physicians. Often there is little to no conversation around vaccination between the physician and parents because the benefits are obvious, and vaccination is standard practice. Anti-vaccine advocates are seeking to change this by advancing onerous informed consent laws which would require doctors to discuss all the possible side-effects and adverse events that could occur from vaccination. While negative outcomes are certainly possible, there is ample literature showing that these occur in an extremely small minority of cases. Anti-vaccine advocates are trying to inappropriately skew physician-parent conversations about vaccination and scare parents who may not understand the risk/benefit analysis when doctors are describing the worst-case scenarios for their children.

### Healthcare worker exemptions

Many healthcare facilities require their personnel to maintain their vaccination status in accordance with to ACIP recommendations and will terminate employees who fail to do so. Some states have considered legislation that would classify such policies that base hiring and firing decisions on a worker's vaccination status as discriminatory and unlawful. Because healthcare workers are care for vulnerable patients and are at risk of contracting and spreading vaccine preventable illnesses, IDSA supports policies to strengthen healthcare worker vaccination. IDSA in partnership with the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) and the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society (PIDS) released a [policy position](#) in 2013 supporting full ACIP recommended vaccinations for healthcare workers.