

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF MR. NICK OFFERMAN
ACTOR AND WOODWORKER**

**BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTAGATIONS**

A SHOT AT NORMALCY: BUILDING COVID-19 VACCINE CONFIDENCE

May 26, 2021

Subcommittee Chairwoman DeGette, Ranking Member Griffith, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss an issue on everyone's minds right now: vaccines. As an actor and a woodworker, I will not be offering medical advice today. I will leave that to the scientists and medical experts on the panel, aka the "smart people". Instead, I would like to represent the rest of the citizens who are not epidemiologists, also known as "the ignorant". Ignorance is an area in which I can claim some authority, and it is from that perch I would like to communicate why it's extremely important that we all get vaccinated.

I understand that some Americans are hesitant to get the vaccine, so I wanted to jump on this opportunity to get a positive message out to them. I am also aware that many people are confused about different aspects of the vaccine, both bad and good, including people who refer to it as a "miracle". While this seems to make sense, given the magnitude of death and destruction the virus has caused, and the speed with which the vaccine prevents that death and destruction when administered, I don't think that "miracle" is accurate. A "miracle" is something inexplicable that appears from nowhere, sent by unseen forces. The vaccine is not a miracle, but a gift. From the world's greatest scientists and thinkers and activists. It's the product of human ingenuity, the absolute pinnacle of achievement, created out of whole cloth by a bunch of dang geniuses who have saved us from endless death and destruction by solving a complex problem of microbiology in record time.

Unfortunately, the very expedience with which the vaccine arrived has also been a source of confusion, causing people to fear that it was rushed. Well, damn right they were rushed, folks, it's a pandemic. But you can rest assured the hustle was not applied to the safety of the product – the science didn't arrive overnight, it was based on 40 years of work – the hustle was just applied to getting that science to you and me, by bypassing the usual bureaucratic hurdles – the red tape.

I get it. I know I'm ignorant, and this subject is very scary. When the pandemic hit, I had a comedy tour cancelled, and then a sci-fi series. Live audiences were done, and still are, but after a few months we were able to start up again carefully shooting tv and film. The reason for this

was because on each show about 200-odd people looked each other in the eye and agreed – we knew how to make a show, but we were ignorant to the medical science – so we agreed to listen to the world’s smartest doctors and then trust each other to follow every strict protocol so that we could go back to making our livings and taking care of our families. 3 different shows I completed because we listened to the doctors. We thought about each other.

I am a small business owner of a custom furniture outfit in Los Angeles called Offerman Woodshop. All of our employees were sent home for 6 months when the pandemic began, and only by utilizing the safety protocols outlined by the CDC had we been able to trickle back to partial output. Now that everyone is vaccinated, we can relax the guidelines and work as productively as we did before the virus struck.

I am also on the board of a Los Angeles based, non-profit enterprise that trains and employs individuals experiencing homelessness to be woodworkers, called Would Works. Because of the heightened medical vulnerability of the unhoused population we serve, the program has been officially closed since March of 2020, losing us a year of revenue, and leaving our artisans out in the cold. But now, due to the ubiquity of vaccines in LA county, we are poised to re-launch all of our programs this summer.

I am close to my large family in the village of Minooka, Illinois. Unfortunately, because of disinformation from social media platforms with no oversight, a few have refused masks from the get-go, and now refuse the vaccine. We also have a couple of immune-compromised family members, which means we have to avoid these members of our own family, whom we love, for the safety of all.

On January 5 of this year, Los Angeles County had 8,098 people hospitalized with COVID-19. A few days ago on May 23, that number was 319. Thanks to the gift of this vaccine. I urge anyone who has not yet been vaccinated to catch my enthusiasm for the smart people who are about to speak. Medicine doesn’t care who you voted for. We amazing humans have created a vaccine that serves the common good. The vaccine doesn’t take sides unless you count alive vs. dead.

I am sincerely grateful to the committee for hearing me today. Thank you very kindly.