No, the Politicians Didn't Save Us From COVID-19

Writing at *Reason* magazine, Eric Boehm notes two trends revealed in data released by Apple and Foursquare.

Trend One: Americans began reducing their outings and social interactions before, not because of, "shelter in place" orders issued by grandstanding, opportunistic politicians.

Trend Two: Americans started coming back out and resuming something like normal life before, not because, those politicians started lifting those orders.

In other words, with COVID-19 as with everything else, government policy is a trailing, rather than leading, indicator.

Politicians don't start parades. They notice parades that we regular people have spontaneously organized, then run as fast as they can to the front of those parades, hoping to be seen "taking charge."

And yet, for some reason, large numbers of Americans remain devout congregants of what Libertarians call the Cult of the Omnipotent State.

At the beginning of every perceived crisis or emergency, the priests and parishioners of the Cult of the Omnipotent State assert that the only way society will survive is if we all act in lockstep obedience to the commands of the politicians.

And after every perceived crisis or emergency, those same priests and parishioners assert that the only reason society survived is that we all DID act in lockstep obedience to the commands of the politicians.

They're always wrong, of course. In fact, it invariably turns out that the politicians and their strutting authoritarian commands made the crisis or emergency worse rather than better — sometimes in a big way, sometimes just at the margins, but at least a little, always and every time.

For some reason, though, we always let the Cultists of the Omnipotent State re-write history with the politicians as the heroes. That's a mistake that costs lives.

As America "re-opens," we should put our minds to avoiding that mistake in the future.