

**Opinion: Why Trump and RFK Jr.
won't 'make America healthy again'**

<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2024-10-11/trump-robert-f-kennedy-jr-food-health-safety>



Robert F. Kennedy Jr., left, waves to the crowd at a rally for Republican presidential nominee and former President Donald Trump in Glendale, Ariz., in August.

(Ross D. Franklin / Associated Press)

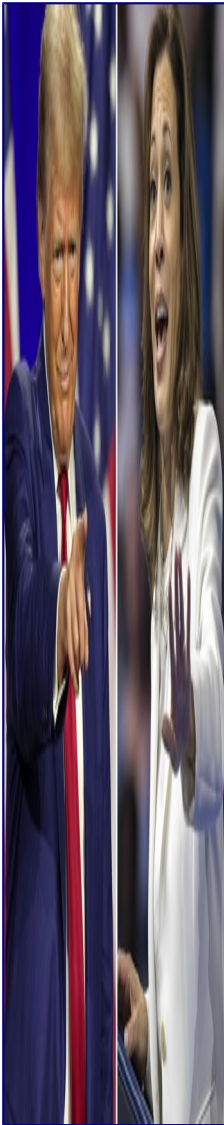
By Christopher D. Cook

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In the first four minutes of a recent video for his “Make America Healthy Again” campaign promoting Donald Trump for president, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. presents a seemingly compelling case about how America’s toxin-laden food system harms us and, worse, our children, contributing to chronic and often fatal diseases. He features unhealthy products such as Cap’n Crunch cereal, Cheez-It crackers and Doritos chips.

Then, much like other moments in RFK Jr.’s strange political trajectory — which has included peddling conspiracy theories on vaccines and other issues — his “MAHA” campaign plunges into outright falsehoods.



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While Kennedy is correct that Democrats have often allowed corporations to put a toxic array of additives into our foods, he bizarrely (and falsely) claims Trump banned such chemical additives. In fact, Trump and Republicans have overturned and opposed efforts to rein in the deadly chemicalization of our meals.

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As one former Trump administration Environmental Protection Agency official told NBC News, “There was a huge amount of pressure to approve chemicals” despite the risks they pose to public health.

It’s one of the many strange things about Kennedy marketing Trump as a president who would make America healthier: The facts show the opposite. The evidence from Trump’s first term shows that if elected this fall, he would make America less healthy — again.



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Here are a few of the many ways in which Trump undermined food safety and public health in his first term:

- Millions of Americans lost healthcare coverage under Trump. As Capital & Main reported, during his presidency the number of

uninsured people rose by more than 440,000 across the key battleground states of Arizona, Nevada, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, census data showed. By contrast, in the first two years of his presidency, Joe Biden increased healthcare access by more than 3 million people, expanding the Affordable Care Act and reversing Trump policies that made it harder to apply for coverage.

- As president, Trump rolled back regulations and bans on toxic chemicals including pesticides applied on our food crops. Trump's EPA rejected a ban that the Obama administration initiated in 2016 on chlorpyrifos, "which is used on more than 60 crops, particularly in California, and has been blamed for sickening farm workers and causing development disabilities in their children," Yale Environment 360 reported.
- Trump initially denied and dismissed the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, putting millions of lives at risk, and later promoted untested and dangerous "treatments" such as hydroxychloroquine. Trump's Occupational Safety and Health Administration blocked efforts to minimize workers' exposure to airborne diseases, even while he ordered food industry workers and others to stay on the job as the pandemic raged on.

- Despite his many promises to “drain the swamp,” Trump tapped a former American Chemistry Council executive to help oversee toxic chemical regulation, and selected a former coal lobbyist to helm the EPA as well as a former oil lobbyist to run the Interior Department — putting industry interests ahead of public health and our environment.
- The Project 2025 plan developed by dozens of Trump’s former staffers and associates calls for major cuts to food and nutrition assistance to lower-income Americans, directly harming their health.

Regrettably, Democrats in Congress and the White House bear some responsibility for corporations proliferating toxins in our food and agriculture, and under both parties, the EPA and FDA have often been feeble in regulating these threats. But the evidence shows that Trump and Republicans enable more harm, packing these key agencies with industry lobbyists and executives, reversing and stalling action to control dangerous chemicals, and gutting regulations to protect consumer health.

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Would Vice President Kamala Harris make America healthier? Her record suggests so. In a rare move, Scientific American endorsed Harris, citing her support for expanding healthcare access (which, studies show, improves people's long-term health), capping prices on life-preserving prescription drugs such as insulin and acting to diminish the deadly harms of guns and climate change.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. could indeed be a force for a healthier America — if he followed the evidence and endorsed Harris instead of Trump.

Christopher D. Cook is a journalist and the author of "Diet for a Dead Planet: Big Business and the Coming Food Crisis."