



RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

March 7, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

It has been reported that Novak Djokovic has formally applied and been denied permission from your administration to enter the United States so that he may compete at the upcoming Miami Open tennis tournament. This denial is unfair, unscientific and unacceptable. I urge you to reconsider. It's time to put pandemic politics aside and give the American people what they want—let him play.

While Mr. Djokovic is surely a supreme competitive threat to his fellow tennis professionals, his presence in our country poses no meaningful health or public safety risk. I note that since the onset of COVID-19, Mr. Djokovic has visited the United States at least twice – including once during your presidency – without any apparent health incident. It is also not clear to me why, even by the terms of your own proclamation, Mr. Djokovic could not legally enter this country via boat.¹ Please confirm no later than Friday, March 10, 2023, that this method of travel into Florida would be permissible.

Furthermore, even as you enacted the Proclamation on air travel that remains in force to this day, your administration pointedly allowed thousands of unvaccinated migrants to enter our country through the southern border. In sum, the current “travel ban” as applied to Mr. Djokovic – and presumably millions of other potential unvaccinated foreign visitors – seems completely ungrounded in logic, common sense, or any genuine concern for the health and welfare of the American people.

Affectionately known as “Tennis’ 5th Grand Slam,” the Miami Open is the second most popular tennis event in the United States and routinely attracts hundreds of thousands of fans as well as premier tennis professionals from around the world. Novak Djokovic, as you surely know, is the most accomplished tennis player in history and the reigning top-ranked player in his sport. As a result of his illustrious career and philanthropic efforts, he has a strong

¹ Your October 25, 2021 Proclamation “governs the entry into the United States of noncitizen nonimmigrants – that is, noncitizens who are visiting the United States or otherwise being admitted temporarily – traveling to the United States by air.” (emphasis added). Beginning in January 2022, your Department of Homeland Security announced similar restrictions for non-U.S. individuals seeking to enter the United States via land ports of entry and ferry terminals at the U.S.-Mexico and U.S.-Canada borders. But your administration does not appear to have issued analogous restrictions for non-U.S. individuals seeking to enter our country by boat.

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following of loyal fans in the United States. There can be no question that his inclusion in the Miami Open would be a tremendous boon both for this treasured tournament and the tennis community at large.

The *only* thing keeping Mr. Djokovic from participating in this tournament is your administration's continued enforcement of a misguided, unscientific, and out-of-date COVID-19 vaccination requirement for foreign guests seeking to visit our great country. American tennis legend John McEnroe recently termed this restriction "absurd." He was quite right to say so.

We are now three years since the onset of COVID-19, and we have learned many valuable - and often painful - lessons during that time. For one thing, it is now clear that the COVID-19 vaccines are not as effective as initially advertised. A new study in the Lancet has found that natural immunity is at least as effective as the COVID vaccines ("Our analysis of the available data suggests that the level of protection afforded by previous infection is at least as high, if not higher than that provided by two-dose vaccination using high-quality mRNA vaccines."). Furthermore, data also suggests that exposure to COVID-19 is now significantly less likely to result in hospitalization or fatality. Finally, not only is the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccine now in question, but recent scientific studies have identified serious potential health risks from the vaccine. Florida's Surgeon General has issued guidance recommending against the COVID-19 mRNA vaccines for males ages 18-39 years old - precisely the cohort of Mr. Djokovic.

Here in Florida, we took a leadership role in rejecting vaccination mandates. Since November 2021, it has been illegal for businesses to require their patrons to be vaccinated against COVID-19. I am proud of these efforts, which unquestionably promoted personal liberty and economic growth without exposing our citizens to *any* substantiated harm. Although it has taken some time, most of the rest of the world has now come to recognize COVID-19 vaccination requirements as obsolete. At present, it appears that the United States is one of only a handful of countries that requires foreign visitors to have received a COVID-19 vaccination. Indeed, in an interview on September 18, 2022, you personally declared that "the pandemic is over," and your administration has already communicated to Congress that the COVID-19 emergency will formally end on May 11. The time has come to give up the fiction that COVID vaccines remain a necessary tool to promote public health.

Mr. Djokovic is an extraordinary tennis player who should have every right to compete in this year's Miami Open, which will commence on March 20. I respectfully ask you to grant his requested exemption so that he may delight and inspire tennis fans in Florida and around the Nation.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'RDS', is written over the typed name and title.

Ron DeSantis
Governor