

For a New Normalcy

October 22, 2020

Science writer Ronald Bailey argues that the best path to “a New Normal” can be found by rolling out home COVID-19 tests. But notes they are illegal.

Bailey’s November piece in *Reason* magazine informs us that “biotech startup E25Bio, diagnostics maker OraSure, and the 3M Co., are working on and could quickly deploy rapid at-home COVID-19 diagnostic tests.”

These tests work, he says, “by detecting, within minutes, the presence of coronavirus proteins using specific antibodies embedded on a paper test strip coated with nasal swab samples or



It’s why many of us oppose regulation by bureaucracy and prefer a rule of law and competition within markets to supply the regulation that businesses need.

saliva. Somewhat like at-home pregnancy tests, the antigen tests change color or reveal lines if COVID-19 proteins are recognized.”

So why not go ahead with these antigen

tests? Well, the Food and Drug Administration doesn’t allow it. Bailey quotes a Harvard epidemiologist: “Until the regulatory landscape changes, those companies have no reason to bring a product to market.”

Regulatory blocking and kludge are just one reason this is not possible.

But if you — or for that matter, Mr. Bailey — think that this problem can just be solved with a Trumpian executive order or a quick legislative fix, there are reasons for doubt.

Our whole system is government-rigged. And, as Ludwig von Mises made clear in *Bureaucracy*, clunky slowness is not just a bug of such systems. It’s the *feature*.

And it’s a bad feature.

It’s why many of us oppose regulation by bureaucracy and prefer a rule of law and competition within markets to supply the regulation that businesses need.

Which suggests to me that the best way back to normalcy is not through a quick government fix but by nixing government fixes more broadly.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.