

Committee to Protect Medicare: Wisconsin docs press Pence to commit to keeping Fauci and resume COVID-19 briefings

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MADISON, Wis. – Wisconsin physicians today called on Vice President Mike Pence, who is visiting the state, to publicly defend Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, from Trump Administration smears, and to allow Fauci to resume his COVID-19 briefings.

Members of President Trump's administration have recently [attacked](#) Fauci, who has served as director of the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases for six presidents from both parties. [Experts](#) and the American [public](#) widely credit Fauci as a trustworthy source of science-based information who is unafraid to put facts ahead of politics.

“During this pandemic, our country has also suffered from lack of clear direction from our federal government leaders, who have often given conflicting information to the public,” said Dr. William Hocking, MD, FACP, of Marshfield. “This has resulted in many individuals ignoring those recommendations that might have curtailed the spread of the novel coronavirus. In order to reverse the course of the pandemic, we need clear and consistent guidance from the federal government, and that would be best provided by Dr. Tony Fauci. Evidence-based recommendations should be strongly supported by the Trump administration.”

“As head of the Administration's COVID-19 task force, Vice President Mike Pence should be tirelessly defending Dr. Anthony Fauci. He is our country's most reliable and trusted messenger during this pandemic, and the Trump Administration's

shameless smears are merely designed to deflect our attention from its own failures,” said Dr. Ann Helms, MD, a neurologist from Brookfield and member of the [Committee to Protect Medicare](#). “Physicians in Wisconsin and across the nation are concerned by the Trump Administration’s ongoing efforts to undermine science and evidence. Vice President Pence should take the opportunity during his visit to Wisconsin to assure citizens in our state that the federal government will acknowledge the facts and listen to the science in order to defend Americans from COVID-19. That commitment begins by allowing Dr. Fauci to brief the nation regularly again as part of the White House task force on COVID-19.”

The call for Pence to stand up for Fauci comes as more than 1,300 physicians and health professionals from across the nation this week signed a [letter](#) urging President Trump to restore regular COVID-19 briefings, with Fauci leading them.

Fauci said he had not seen Trump since June 2 and had [not briefed](#) him in two months.

[Committee to Protect Medicare](#) Executive Director **Dr. Rob Davidson**, MD, an emergency physician, said: “As a nation, we can move forward only if we follow the science and the evidence. Dr. Anthony Fauci has proven during the COVID-19 pandemic that he is not afraid to always put science at the heart of decision-making, even if that ruffles political feathers. Americans deserve courage and integrity in our leadership, and Dr. Fauci demonstrates those qualities even when others don’t. Pence should defend Dr. Fauci and encourage the rest of the Administration to do the same.”

Dr. Hocking said: “The United States has now suffered over 3.5 million recognized cases of COVID-19 and more than 137,000 deaths. This is the time that we need to listen to the advice of medical and public health experts advising us on how to manage the pandemic, which is currently out of control in our country. Dr. Tony Fauci is an expert in control of pandemic infections. Yet, the Trump administration has often ignored his advice and recently undertaken a bizarre campaign to discredit him. Dr. Fauci is a non-partisan expert, and he makes recommendations based on the best available science and evidence. At this point, we need his expertise more than ever.”

TEXT OF PHYSICIANS LETTER:

As physicians & health care workers serving communities across the United States,

we call on the Trump Administration to restore regular briefings on the COVID-19 pandemic by Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases. We further call on President Trump and members of his administration to cease all recent efforts to [undermine](#) his credibility and integrity.

A trusted and highly respected veteran of pandemics and emergent disease, Dr. Fauci has served six administrations from both parties since the 1980s. For more than three decades, he has led efforts to understand and contain viral epidemics from HIV/AIDS and SARS to Zika and Ebola. Dr. Fauci has provided science-based, sensible and sober information during the COVID19 pandemic that aims, above all else, to keep Americans as safe as possible during an outbreak of a novel coronavirus, SARS-Cov-2, that researchers, doctors and scientists are still learning about every day.

Dr. Fauci's greatest value to Americans during a deadly pandemic is his consistent commitment to focus on [facts](#), science and data, even when this means speaking up against the president. In keeping with core principles of modern medicine, Dr. Fauci consistently weighs provable benefits against potential risks so physicians, public health experts and policymakers can make the best decisions during this pandemic. To this end, he has consistently ensured that science and evidence, not political convenience, direct pandemic policy decisions.

As early as Feb. 7, Dr. Fauci [cautioned](#) about the limitations of narrow travel bans during a global pandemic, warned about person-to-person infections from carriers who showed no symptoms and — reflecting the humility that scientific inquiry demands — admitted that researchers still had a lot to learn about “brand new diseases” like COVID-19. Five days earlier, President Trump [told](#) Fox News' Sean Hannity: “We pretty much shut it down coming in from China.” Trump's travel restrictions [hadn't yet](#) gone into effect when Trump and Hannity spoke.

On March 15, Dr. Fauci [warned](#) Americans to “hunker down significantly more than we as a country are doing.” Social distancing was being introduced at that time as a potentially effective strategy to reduce infections. Some countries like Italy had implemented a national stay-at-home order, and states such as New York, Illinois and California followed suit with their own stay-at-home [directives](#). Yet, some Americans continued to congregate in crowds, resulting in [outbreaks](#) and infection spread. On March 23, concerned about the impact of economic shutdowns to his reelection, President Trump, [tweeted](#): “WE CANNOT LET THE CURE BE WORSE THAN THE PROBLEM ITSELF.” (The [research](#) so far indicates that infections rates slowed

when states implemented stay-at-home orders.)

When the United States passed the grim milestone of 3 million COVID-19 infections in the first week of July, Dr. Fauci warned the nation against “false complacency” and President Trump’s “false narrative to take [comfort](#) in a lower rate of death.” In his [remarks](#) July 7, Dr. Fauci called on Americans — again — to refrain from “allowing yourself to get infected because of risky behavior, you are part of the propagation of the outbreak.”

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Fauci has repeatedly served as an independent and reliable voice of science and evidence, regardless of the political consequences or public pressure:

- In May, when President Trump repeatedly and without proof touted [hydroxychloroquine](#) as a miracle cure for COVID-19, Dr. Fauci warned that the evidence at that point cast doubt on its effectiveness.
- Dr. Fauci cautioned that a vaccine may not be enough to get the United States to [herd immunity](#), when a large enough portion of the population develops a natural resistance to a virus.
- He rejected President Trump’s medically inaccurate [claim](#) that 99 percent of COVID-19 cases are harmless.
- Dr. Fauci warned Americans that COVID-19 will continue to put Americans at risk in [fall 2020](#), even as President Trump claims the coronavirus will disappear.

Time and time again, Dr. Fauci has been a sober voice balancing available medical data and information against the understandable human desire to put the pandemic behind us. As physicians and practitioners of scientific medicine, we remind all Americans that COVID-19 is a virus that follows its own timetable and that research continues to uncover new information every day. What we can do is we must follow available evidence and data when formulating best practices designed to mitigate and minimize the coronavirus’ harmful effects as we strive to keep people safer and

protect lives.

We must continue to include important voices such as Dr. Fauci's in our pandemic response efforts and resist political efforts to silence his invaluable counsel. In the face of a global deadly pandemic that has claimed more than 137,000 American lives and sickened millions more, we need Dr. Fauci's experience, candor and expertise to navigate a safe, responsible way forward, providing both direction and hope to our nation.