

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Calls on Republicans to stand for science, support bill to stop Trump administration's political interference in COVID-19 response

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) helped introduce the *Science and Transparency Over Politics (STOP) Act*, legislation led by Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) to fight back against political interference by the Trump administration in the work of experts and the nation's public health agencies responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We’ve lost 200,000 Americans to COVID-19 and my home state of Wisconsin is experiencing a dramatic spike in cases. Yet, President Trump continues to politicize our nation’s response to this public health crisis by pressuring federal agencies to put politics over science and facts,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “The Trump administration’s constant, dangerous political interference in the response to this ongoing and growing pandemic is having deadly results. We need oversight and transparency of the federal government’s pandemic response efforts so the American people receive public health information based on facts and science alone.”

“200,000 Americans have passed away from coronavirus, millions of workers have lost their jobs, families are facing enormous challenges, and the Trump administration is still pushing the president’s political priorities rather than following the science to defeat this virus,” **said Leader Schumer**. “We simply cannot trust this administration to protect the American people, which is why Congress must step in. America will not defeat this virus if people do not have confidence that treatments, vaccines and guidance are approved with only public health goals in mind. That confidence has been shaken, but this bill is a first step to restoring it. With the *STOP Act*, we will establish essential oversight of the coronavirus response that my Republican colleagues should not hesitate to support.”

“It is painfully clear that the Trump Administration won’t stop the political interference which is threatening our response to this pandemic and putting lives in jeopardy on its own, so it is up to Congress to act. We need transparency and accountability from top to bottom, and we need it now—before it is too late to prevent more costly mistakes. Now is the time for every Republican who has said they trust the experts and believe we must follow the science to prove they meant it by supporting this legislation. You cannot be for science if you’re silent about political interference in our pandemic response,” **said Senator Murray**.

The *STOP Act* would create a task force within the Pandemic Response and Accountability Committee charged with conducting a thorough investigation into any political interference with decisions made by scientific agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services in connection with the pandemic response. These reports would be released to committees of jurisdiction and could be made public so Americans and independent experts can see with full transparency whether scientists were impeded in their work or a product was pushed for political reasons. Additionally, the task force would have full discretion to release any information that it deems is in the public interest and may be important to public safety. The push for additional oversight of the Trump administration comes following a barrage of alarming instances of Trump officials undermining the work of public health agencies on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- **September, 18:** The [New York Times](#) reports that Secretary Azar has barred

the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) from signing any new rules without his approval.

- **September, 18:** The [New York Times](#) and [Washington Post](#) report further on how Trump Administration political appointees tried to silence Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) experts.
- **September, 15:** [Politico](#) reports that Secretary Azar overruled the head of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) when Azar moved to loosen oversight of COVID-19 testing and allow unreliable tests to flood the market.
- **September, 14:** The [New York Times](#) reports that the spokesperson for the Department of Health and Human Services has promoted false conspiracy theories about the work of experts and scientists at the nation's public health agencies.
- **September, 12:** The [New York Times](#) reports that the Trump Administration pressured officials at the FDA and National Institutes of Health (NIH) to authorize convalescent plasma therapy before their review of its safety and effectiveness were complete.
- **September, 11:** [Politico](#) reports that politically appointed Trump Administration officials demanded oversight of reports from CDC experts, and have worked to edit and append findings from CDC experts in its flagship scientific publication, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.
- **September, 9:** [Politico](#) reports that a Trump Administration appointee was attempting to dictate talking points to NIH officials.
- **September 4:** [President Trump](#) contradicts his own experts, and says a vaccine will be ready in October.
- **August, 26:** [CNN](#) reports that the CDC was pressured by the Trump Administration to alter its testing guidance to be more restrictive. (this guidance has since been reversed)
- **August, 22:** [President Trump](#) tweets accusing the FDA of holding back a vaccine, writing, "The deep state, or whoever, over at the FDA is making it very difficult for drug companies to get people in order to test the vaccines and therapeutics. Obviously, they are hoping to delay the answer until after November 3rd. Must focus on speed, and saving lives! @SteveFDA"

The administration's interference in the work of the nation's public health agencies far precedes this most recent string of alarming examples. President Trump promoted [hydroxychloroquine](#) as an unproven treatment for COVID-19, and reportedly removed the head of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority for insisting this claim be scientifically vetted. Trump Administration officials also blocked and contradicted CDC guidance meant to help schools, workplaces, and communities reopen.

The legislation is cosponsored by Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Bob Casey (D-PA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Jack Reed (D-RI), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Gary Peters (D-MI), Ed Markey (D-MA), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Tina Smith (D-MN), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), and Bernie Sanders (I-VT).

See the full text of the *STOP Act* [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).