

'I Don't Recall': Fauci Unable to Answer Key Questions in Pandemic Probe

Dr. Anthony Fauci claimed more than 100 times that he did not remember details about the pandemic response and origins during a House interview Monday regarding COVID-19 policies and funding decisions.

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On the first day of a two-day closed-door interview before the U.S. House of Representatives [Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic](#) Monday, Dr. Anthony Fauci, former director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID), frequently evaded questions about gain-of-function research and the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chairman Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio), in a [statement](#) following Monday's interview, said,

"Dr. Fauci's testimony today uncovered drastic and systemic failures in America's public health systems" and that Fauci "had no idea what was happening under his own jurisdiction at NIAID."

[According to The Hill](#), Fauci offered "his expertise on preparing for potential outbreaks in the future." But [according to The Washington Times](#), he "couldn't remember many details about his advocacy of lockdowns, his flip-flopping on mask mandates and his decision to allow government [funding of gain-of-function research](#) in China that might have led to the pandemic."

Fauci "claimed he 'did not recall' pertinent [COVID-19](#) information or conversations more than 100 times," and "profusely defended his [previous congressional testimony](#) where he stated the National Institutes of Health (NIH) did not fund gain-of-function [research in Wuhan](#)," according to the subcommittee statement.

Fauci also “repeatedly played semantics with the definition of gain-of-function in an attempt to avoid conceding that NIH funded potentially dangerous research in China,” the subcommittee stated.

Responding to Monday’s testimony, Rutgers University molecular biologist [Richard Ebright, Ph.D.](#), a frequent critic of gain-of-function research, told [The Defender](#):

“Fauci repeatedly and flagrantly violated U.S. government policies implemented to protect the public from lab-generated pandemics. He lied — brazenly — to Congress about his policy violations in three Senate hearings in 2021-2022. He lied — brazenly — to Congress about his policy violations again yesterday.”

Investigative journalist [Paul D. Thacker](#), who has documented attempts by Fauci and other government officials, federal agencies and leading scientists to cover up the U.S. government’s role in funding gain-of-function research in China, told The Defender he was not surprised by Fauci’s stance.

“As [I documented over two years ago](#), Anthony Fauci has lied about funding gain-of-function research in Wuhan. That’s fine. People in Washington lie all the time,” Thacker said.

“But when he lied during a [congressional hearing](#), wagging his finger at Senator [Rand] Paul ... I knew immediately he had broken the law. His lies about this pandemic have been documented in multiple media outlets and I hope he is eventually prosecuted,” he added.

[Francis Boyle, J.D., Ph.D.](#), professor of international law at the University of Illinois and a bioweapons expert who drafted the [Biological Weapons Anti-Terrorism Act of 1989](#), told The Defender Fauci should be prosecuted.

“Fauci knew exactly what was going on at the Wuhan BSL4 [[biosafety level 4](#)] and the University of North Carolina BSL3 — he was paying for it,” Boyle said. “He has repeatedly perjured himself in testimony before Congress. This is just more of the same.”

Boyle said Wenstrup should follow Sen. Rand Paul’s (R-Ky.) example and refer Fauci to the U.S. Department of Justice for prosecution for perjury.

“Maybe we will get some action there now that the Wuhan cover-up is unfolding, as detailed in Robert F. Kennedy Jr.’s book, ‘[The Wuhan Cover-Up](#),’” he added.

The seven-hour meeting was Fauci’s first appearance in the House since retiring from public office in December 2022. He was accompanied by two of his attorneys and two government attorneys, according to The Hill.

The closed-door testimony was [first announced by Wenstrup](#) on Nov. 30, 2023. In the same announcement, Wenstrup revealed that Fauci will sit before the subcommittee as part of a public hearing later in 2024. That meeting has not yet been scheduled.

In his statement about Monday’s interview, Wenstrup said it was “concerning that the face of our nation’s response to the world’s worst public health crisis ‘does not recall’ key details

about COVID-19 origins and pandemic-era policies. Nearly 1.2 million Americans lost their lives to a potentially preventable pandemic,” he added.

Fauci ‘Repeatedly and Flagrantly Violated’ Gain-of-function Research Definitions

According to The Washington Times, lawmakers prepared 200 pages of questions for Fauci. In remarks [quoted by The New York Post](#), Wenstrup said Fauci’s testimony “will shed light on topics that no Committee member, nor news outlet has ever inquired about before.”

Fauci took several breaks during the interview, but the meeting had a [“respectful” and “cooperative” tone](#). Fauci did not take questions from reporters.

Yet, despite the reported tone, Fauci was evasive on key issues, such as gain-of-function research.

Regarding Fauci’s apparently poor recall, [Wenstrup said](#), “That just means that maybe we have to find the people that do recall.”

In a Jan. 4 op-ed [published in The New York Post](#), James Bovard, author of [“Last Rights: The Death of American Liberty,”](#) wrote that “The subcommittee announced Fauci’s ‘honesty is non-negotiable.’”

“But will his memory stage another boycott?” Bovard asked, noting that when [Fauci was deposed in 2022](#) for the [Missouri v. Biden lawsuit](#) on government censorship of COVID-19 counternarratives, he answered “I don’t recall” 174 times, “including about [damning and quite memorable emails](#) he sent.”

Much of this evasiveness appears to have come in response to [questions about gain-of-function](#) research.

[Wenstrup remarked](#) on Fauci’s “new ... operational definition” of gain-of-function. “I don’t know that every scientist that deals with this type of viral research understands his definition.”

According to Ebright:

“Fauci’s attempt to deny he violated U.S. government policies by claiming he uses different definitions of ‘gain-of-function research’ and enhanced potential pandemic pathogen research is equivalent — exactly equivalent — to a terrorist attempting to deny he violated federal laws by claiming he uses different definitions of ‘terrorism.’

“Fauci was not empowered to replace definitions in U.S. government policies with his own personal definitions.”

Ebright told The Defender the only definitions of “gain-of-function research” and “enhanced potential pandemic pathogen research” that matter are the definitions in the [U.S. government policies in effect in 2014-2017](#) and from [2018 to the present](#).

Based on those definitions, Ebright said Fauci “repeatedly and flagrantly violated” the guidelines for both types of research.

[According to Newsweek](#), “Fauci has previously denied in testimony to Congress that the National Institutes of Health, of which he was a member between 1984 and 2022, had funded risky ‘gain-of-function’ research.”

A Jan. 6 [report by U.S. Right to Know](#) said that “scientists at the center of the ‘[lab leak](#)’ controversy” [visited Fauci’s NIAID in 2017](#) to discuss their research — “just months before NIH lifted a pause on high-risk virology, and two years before a novel coronavirus emerged near their lab in Wuhan.”

Rep. Kathy Castor (D-Fla.) [defended Fauci](#) after Monday’s interview:

“A lot of our GOP colleagues have failed to recognize the operative, regulatory definition [of] gain-of-function that was [instituted in 2017](#) was operative at the time the COVID pandemic came along. And the concern over [EcoHealth Alliance](#) ... Dr. Fauci was able to clarify that today.”

[Wenstrup said](#) the subcommittee planned to question Fauci further regarding gain-of-function research today.

Fauci Unable to Confirm NIAID Had Any Oversight of U.S.-funded Foreign Labs

Monday’s interview also addressed government grants for gain-of-function research and foreign laboratories, such as the Wuhan Institute of Virology in Wuhan, China.

According to the subcommittee, Fauci “testified that he signed off on every foreign and domestic NIAID grant without reviewing the proposals” but “was unable to confirm if NIAID has ANY mechanisms to conduct oversight of the foreign laboratories they fund.”

“A [2020 email](#), previously released by the Select Subcommittee, proved Dr. Fauci was aware of dangerous gain-of-function research occurring in Wuhan, China. Today, he backtracked by arguing he should not have stated that as ‘fact,’” the subcommittee added.

□BREAKING□

New emails reveal that Dr. Fauci was aware of risky gain-of-function research occurring in Wuhan, China prior to the emergence of COVID-19.

Why didn’t he tell the American people? [@COVIDSelect](#) is demanding answers□
pic.twitter.com/pvxtaCRB5s

— Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic (@COVIDSelect) [July 13, 2023](#)

In its Nov. 30, 2023 statement, [the subcommittee said](#) it had previously “revealed [evidence](#) that [Dr. Fauci prompted the drafting](#) of the now infamous ‘[Proximal Origin](#)’ publication to disprove the lab-leak theory. Fauci then cited the paper from the White House podium [without disclosing his involvement](#) in prompting the publication.

“Further, the [Select Subcommittee revealed](#) that Dr. Fauci was aware of dangerous

gain-of-function research occurring in Wuhan, China prior to the emergence of COVID-19, but remained curiously silent to the public,” the statement read.

Following Monday’s interview, Wenstrup said that Fauci’s responses indicated there were [“some tremendous flaws in our system”](#) concerning issuing grants.

“Dr. Fauci signed off on all domestic and foreign research grants without reviewing the proposals and admitted that he was unaware if NIAID conducted oversight of the laboratories they fund,” Wenstrup said in the subcommittee statement.

“Clearly, the American people and the United States government are operating with completely different expectations about the responsibilities of our public health leaders and the accountability of our public health agencies,” he added.

But Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-Mich.) defended Fauci’s responses on this issue, saying

“I think it’s [probably pretty political](#) that we’re here to begin with. But I think they’re asking questions and he is being very specific in answering.”

She added that the closed-door nature of the interview afforded Fauci the opportunity to “clarify a lot of political points people have tried to make,” without “playing to the cameras.”

Fauci’s testimony was scheduled to continue today, with further questions about the “Proximal Origin” paper and COVID-19 countermeasures.

“I look forward to asking Dr. Fauci further questions about mandates, his role in prompting the ‘Proximal Origin’ publication, and his policy positions related to masks and lockdowns,” Wenstrup said in Monday’s statement.

“Tomorrow’s testimony will continue the Select Subcommittee’s effort to deliver the answers Americans demand and deserve.”

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