

The Trump Administration's Pattern of Political Interference in the Nation's Coronavirus Response

The Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis is investigating the Trump Administration's failed public health response to the coronavirus crisis, which has led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans and the infections of millions more. On October 30, 2020, the Select Subcommittee published a list of 61 separate instances of political interference by the prior Administration from February through October 2020—including repeatedly overruling and bullying our nation's scientists and making decisions that allowed the virus to spread more rapidly in an attempt to advance former President Trump's electoral prospects.¹

The Select Subcommittee has now documented a total of 88 separate incidents of the Trump Administration's political interference in the pandemic response. These incidents degraded every major facet of the prior Administration's public health response, including efforts to provide Americans access to testing and personal protective equipment (PPE), develop treatments and vaccines, and provide scientifically sound advice to the public on masks, social distancing, and other steps to stay safe.

For example, Trump Administration political appointees:

- **Lied to the public for political ends**, including about the availability of testing;
- **Pressured health experts to adopt the Trump Administration's talking points**, even when they conflicted with science;
- **Criticized, sidelined, and fired experts** who insisted on sharing accurate scientific information with the public;
- **Altered, delayed, and suppressed guidance and scientific reports** more than a dozen times, including on coronavirus prevention measures, testing, voting safely, and other topics;
- **Promoted a dangerous "herd immunity" strategy** of allowing the virus to spread among the United States prior to the development and administration of vaccines;
- **Authorized questionable virus treatments** over the objections of scientists and for political purposes; and
- **Attempted to conceal evidence of political interference.**

The Select Subcommittee's analysis is based on public reporting and the Select Subcommittee's investigations. It includes instances where the Trump Administration actively interfered in the nation's public health response through executive action or public or private pressure. It does not capture each instance in which President Trump or his appointees downplayed the danger of the virus to the public, made false and misleading statements about the science, and misstated key facts about the Administration's response.

	Date	Political Interference
1.	February 20, 2020	The Administration Ignores Advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to Separate Infected Cruise Ship Passengers. The <i>Washington Post</i> reports that following a coronavirus outbreak on the Diamond Princess cruise ship outside of Japan, a top Trump Administration official overruled CDC’s recommendation to separate infected and non-infected passengers onto different flights. ²
2.	February 25, 2020	President Trump Threatens to Fire a CDC Official for Sharing Accurate Information. Dr. Nancy Messonnier, Director of CDC’s National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, warned that the American public should “prepare with the expectation that this could be bad.” ³ The <i>Wall Street Journal</i> reports that these comments prompted President Trump to call Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar threatening to fire Dr. Messonnier. ⁴ Secretary Azar reportedly “went about destroying” Dr. Messonnier’s reputation after she spoke out publicly. ⁵
3.	Late February 2020	Vice President Pence Bars HHS from Making Public Statements that Might “Alarm the Public.” Following Dr. Messonnier’s warning to the public on February 25, “An order came from Vice President Mike Pence’s office saying that henceforth no one in Department of Health and Human Services was allowed to say anything that might alarm the public.” ⁶ Vice President Pence’s press secretary, Katie Miller, reportedly issued the directive. Reporting indicates that Ms. Miller also “soundly rejected” Secretary Azar’s “proposed talking points that said things were under control but ‘could change rapidly,’” pulling him from a planned television appearance and prohibiting him from doing any media for 45 days. ⁷
4.	March 2020	The Administration Lies to Public About Availability of Testing. The <i>Washington Post</i> reports that the Trump Administration’s claims that anyone seeking a coronavirus test could get one were misleading or outright falsehoods. Admiral Brett Giroir, the nation’s coronavirus testing czar during the Trump Administration, has since acknowledged: “When we said there were millions of tests available, there weren’t, right? There were components of the test available, but not the full meal deal.” ⁸

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5.	March – April 2020	The White House Rejects a National Testing Plan Because It Was Politically Expedient to Blame Democratic Governors. <i>Vanity Fair</i> reports that White House Senior Advisor Jared Kushner convened a working group at the White House in March and April that designed a national testing plan, but the Administration ultimately dropped the plan because political aides felt it was more advantageous to blame Democratic governors. ⁹ Mr. Kushner reportedly said: “We’re going to put testing back to the states. We can’t be responsible.” ¹⁰
6.	March 5, 2020	The Administration Delays a CDC Travel Alert. <i>CNN</i> reports that CDC planned to post a global travel alert on March 5 that would have urged precautions for international travel anywhere in the world, but the Administration delayed the alert by nearly a week. ¹¹
7.	March 7, 2020	The Administration Overrules CDC Officials on a Travel Advisory for the Elderly. The <i>Associated Press</i> reports that the White House overruled CDC officials who sought to recommend that the elderly and others more susceptible to the virus should avoid flying on commercial flights during the pandemic. While the Administration later suggested that vulnerable populations should consider not traveling, it resisted the stricter guidance proposed by CDC. ¹²
8.	March 9 – May 29, 2020	The White House “Muzzled” CDC Briefings. Following a March 9 briefing in which Dr. Messonnier accurately warned that the coronavirus would rapidly spread in the United States, CDC stopped providing public briefings about the pandemic for more than two months. <i>CNN</i> reports that “CDC officials said they’ve been ‘muzzled’ and that their agency’s efforts to mount a coordinated response to the Covid-19 pandemic were hamstrung by a White House whose decisions are driven by politics rather than science.” ¹³ A senior CDC official told <i>Pro Publica</i> : “The threat is clear. If we want to ever be able to talk tomorrow or next week or next month—or whatever is being dangled in front of us, you stay inside the lines.” ¹⁴ A former HHS official confirmed to the <i>Wall Street Journal</i> that White House officials routinely denied CDC’s requests to brief reporters. ¹⁵

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9.	March 17 – 20, 2020	The Administration Misrepresents Virus Data to Close Border. The <i>New York Times</i> reports that White House Senior Advisor Stephen Miller led an effort to aggressively use public health laws as a pretext to reduce immigration. ¹⁶ <i>Pro Publica</i> reports that on March 17, Mr. Miller urged Administration officials to use CDC’s quarantine powers to close the border with Mexico and deport unaccompanied children seeking asylum even if they tested negative for the coronavirus. The next day, a lawyer at HHS circulated a proposed order to close the borders with Mexico and Canada, which a CDC official stated relied upon a “misrepresented and incomplete piece of data” to overstate the threat, noting that cases “are far fewer [in Canada and Mexico] than the # of cases in the US now due to community spread.” CDC Director of Global Migration and Quarantine Martin Cetron refused to sign off on the order, telling a colleague: “I will not be a part of this. It’s just morally wrong to use a public authority that has never, ever, ever been used this way. It’s to keep Hispanics out of the country. And it’s wrong.” CDC Director Robert Redfield signed the order over Dr. Cetron’s objections on March 20. ¹⁷
10.	March 19 – 21, 2020	The White House Refuses to Coordinate Procurement and Distribution of PPE to Address Shortages. As HHS’s Strategic National Stockpile was depleted of PPE in March, ¹⁸ calls arose for the federal government to take a central role in procuring and distributing supplies. President Trump refused, saying on March 19 that the federal government is “not a shipping clerk.” ¹⁹ <i>Vanity Fair</i> reports that, on March 21, Mr. Kushner rebuffed offers from private sector groups to help address supply problems, stating: “The federal government is not going to lead this response. It’s up to the states to figure out what they want to do.” Despite widespread concerns that states were bidding against each other for PPE and calls to invoke the Defense Production Act, Mr. Kushner said: “That is not the role of government.” ²⁰
11.	April 2020	The White House Quashes Plan to Have the Postal Service Send Masks to Every U.S. Household. The White House blocked plans to send 650 million reusable masks to all U.S. households through the Postal Service in April, instead deciding to privately send masks to the private sector, schools, and other community organizations. An Administration official told the <i>Washington Post</i> this change was due to the “concern from some in the White House Domestic Policy Council and the Office of the Vice President that households receiving masks might create concern or panic.” ²¹

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12.	April 2020	The Administration Weakens Cruise Ship Restrictions. <i>USA Today</i> reports that the Office of the Vice President instructed CDC to revise its guidance for cruise ships to shorten a no-sail order and soften language, including removing a warning that the order may be extended. ²² <i>Pro Publica</i> reports that the Department of Homeland Security also weakened criticism from CDC of the cruise ship industry’s response to the coronavirus pandemic in the draft order. ²³
13.	April 2020	The Administration Pressures CDC to Reopen Theme Parks and Overnight Camps. <i>NBC News</i> reports that White House officials exerted pressure on CDC to reopen theme parks and overnight camps in April, which CDC officials described as “strange” and premature in light of the public health crisis. ²⁴
14.	April – May 2020	President Trump Contradicted Experts and Pushed to Reopen the Economy Without a Plan to Stay Safe. President Trump repeatedly pushed to reopen and lift shutdown orders—despite warnings from White House Coronavirus Task Force members Dr. Anthony Fauci and Dr. Deborah Birx that containment measures were still needed in hot spots. The <i>New York Times</i> reports that most states that started to reopen in early May did not meet the Task Force’s recommended criteria for reopening. ²⁵ In pushing to reopen, President Trump downplayed the risk from the virus, saying “People die from the flu. But we’ve never closed down the country from the flu.” ²⁶ Bob Woodward later revealed that President Trump acknowledged privately on February 7 that the coronavirus was “more deadly than even your strenuous flus” and that “[y]ou just breathe the air and that’s how it’s passed.” ²⁷
15.	April 14, 2020	The Administration Halts Funding to the World Health Organization (WHO). <i>Politico</i> reports that the Administration halted funding to WHO, following President Trump’s criticism of the organization. Defunding WHO is counter to the pandemic preparedness plan the Trump Administration drafted in 2017, which advocated for “expanded international coordination on pandemic preparedness and response” and called for “continued support” for WHO. ²⁸ On May 29, President Trump announced he was unilaterally “terminating” the United States’ relationship with WHO. ²⁹ Key U.S. public health leaders with ongoing partnerships with WHO—such as Admiral Giroir, the federal government’s designated representative to WHO—testified before the Select Subcommittee and other Congressional committees that they were not consulted before President Trump made this decision. ³⁰

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16.	April 16, 2020	The Administration Instructs CDC to Post Non-Scientific Reopening Guidance on Website. The White House posted its “Opening Up America Again” guidance on CDC’s website, which—according to an internal review later conducted by CDC—“was not primarily authored by CDC staff.” The guidance was removed from CDC’s website on February 7, 2021. ³¹
17.	April 17 – 20, 2020	President Trump Removes an HHS Official for Seeking Rigorous Vetting of a Potentially Dangerous Drug, Hydroxychloroquine. The <i>New York Times</i> reports that Dr. Rick Bright was ousted as Director of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) for refusing to push hydroxychloroquine. Dr. Bright stated that the Administration put “politics and cronyism ahead of science.” ³²
18.	April 21 – 22, 2020	CDC Weakens Safety Protocols for Meat Processing Plants Following Intervention by Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary. <i>MSNBC</i> reports that following a meeting with USDA Secretary Sonny Purdue, CDC Director Redfield’s office directed CDC staff to revise the language on its own coronavirus safety protocols for a South Dakota Smithfield meat processing plant to make the public health guidance appear as optional suggestions. ³³ The <i>New York Times</i> reports that Vice President Pence’s chief of staff, Marc Short, directed Dr. Redfield to soften the language and reduce the agency’s recommendations to suggestions. Dr. Redfield reportedly confided to one of the Vice President’s aides immediately afterward that he felt that he was in an impossible position. ³⁴
19.	Early May 2020	Administration Officials Shelve CDC Guidance on Safe Reopening. The <i>Associated Press</i> reports that CDC intended to release its “Guidance for Implementing the Opening Up America Again Framework” on May 1, but the White House blocked it, calling the document “overly prescriptive.” CDC scientists were told the guidance “would never see the light of day” amid concerns from political appointees about damage to the economy. ³⁵
20.	May 1, 2020	The Administration Cancels Federal Grant for Coronavirus Research Due to Conspiracy Theory. <i>ABC News</i> reports that the National Institutes of Health (NIH) terminated a grant that existed for years—which was renewed in 2019 under President Trump—due to the researchers’ partnership with the Wuhan Institute of Virology. ³⁶ President Trump claimed that the coronavirus was created and released by this biomedical lab in China, despite previously praising China’s “efforts and transparency” around the coronavirus and thanking Chinese President XI for his handling of the outbreak. ³⁷

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21.	May 6, 2020	The White House Council of Economic Advisers Publicize a Misleading Projection of Coronavirus Deaths. The <i>New York Times</i> reports the White House Council of Economic Advisers publicized a projections chart that suggested that Americans will stop dying of the coronavirus by the middle of May. Outside experts said the “dotted line in the chart could only mislead people into believing it was a forecast for a rapid decline in deaths.” ³⁸
22.	May 16, 2020	HHS Hires Ex-Pharma Executives with Financial Interests in Vaccine Makers to Oversee Vaccine Development Process. <i>Politico</i> reports that by hiring Dr. Moncef Slaoui as an independent contractor, HHS let him maintain millions of dollars of pharmaceutical company securities. The Select Subcommittee’s investigation shows that Dr. Slaoui and other Operation Warp Speed advisors maintained stock holdings that pose serious, unresolved conflicts of interest that could undermine the integrity of the Administration’s vaccine development and review process. ³⁹
23.	May 16 – 17, 2020	Senior HHS Officials Work with White House Officials to Construct Rationale for Reopening in Spring 2020. HHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (ASPA) Michael Caputo and HHS Senior Advisor, Dr. Paul Alexander, worked with officials at the White House—possibly at the direction of President Trump—to construct rationales to justify reopening businesses in Spring 2020, contradicting recommendations from CDC and the nation’s top public health officials. On May 16, Mr. Caputo wrote to Dr. Alexander: “I know the President wants us to enumerate the economic cost of not reopening.” ⁴⁰ The following day, Dr. Alexander wrote to Mr. Caputo, “I have given Patrick [Brennan, Director of Speechwriting at HHS] stuff he is using for Peter Navvaro [sic] e.g. 40,000 cancer deaths for 2020 etc.; do I give him this too or do you want this for the President?” ⁴¹ This effort apparently culminated in a May 21 op-ed published by Secretary Azar in the <i>Washington Post</i> entitled, “We Have to Reopen – for Our Health,” which called for lifting public health restrictions and reopening the country. ⁴²

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24.	May 19, 2020	The Administration Ignores Warnings About Mass Outbreaks at ICE Detention Centers. <i>CNN</i> reports that the Administration was warned in March about the “imminent risk to the health and safety of immigrant detainees.” ⁴³ A study conducted in late-April found that between 72 and 100 percent of detainees would be infected. However, the Administration refused to take recommended measures to protect the health of detainees, continuing to press a partisan agenda based on anti-immigrant policies implemented under the guise of pandemic response. ⁴⁴
25.	May 22, 2020	Senior HHS Officials Seek to Influence CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) on Early Spread of Coronavirus. The Select Subcommittee’s investigation shows that Dr. Alexander sought to alter the title and contents of an MMWR entitled, “Evidence for Early Spread of COVID-19 Within the United States, January – February 2020.” Dr. Alexander stated that he had discussed the matter with Assistant Secretary Caputo and wanted to insert language praising what he called the Administration’s “[s]trong mitigation and containment measures.” Dr. Alexander also asked to revise the report’s title, which he claimed was “misleading and little inflaming [sic]” because it indicated that “COVID was in US prior to when it was first detected etc.” ⁴⁵ CDC changed the report’s title in a manner that downplayed the report’s key finding, but did not add the requested reference to the Administration’s actions. ⁴⁶
26.	May 23, 2020	The White House Alters Guidance to Faith Communities. The <i>Wall Street Journal</i> reports that President Trump and top White House officials pressured CDC Director Redfield to declare houses of worship essential and allow them to reopen. ⁴⁷ <i>Pro Publica</i> reports that White House officials later provided comments on draft CDC guidance for faith communities, but CDC rejected revisions that conflicted with science, including a suggestion to delete CDC’s recommendation to “consider suspending or at least decreasing” choir singing. CDC released the guidance on May 22. The following day, the Vice President’s staff communicated to CDC that the failure to accept White House comments was insubordinate. CDC then replaced the agency’s version of the guidance with the White House’s version. ⁴⁸ The <i>Washington Post</i> reports that despite the evidence underlying CDC’s initial recommendations, the White House and some members of the White House Coronavirus Task Force were reportedly “resistant to establishing limits on religious institutions” and “did not want to alienate the evangelical community.” ⁴⁹

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27.	June 2020	The Administration Installs Partisans in Nonpolitical CDC Posts. The <i>Associated Press</i> reports that the White House installed two political operatives who lacked public health backgrounds—Nina Witkofsky and Chester “Trey” Moeller—to key positions at CDC to try to control the information the agency released about the coronavirus pandemic. These positions are typically filled by nonpolitical civil servants. ⁵⁰
28.	June 5, 2020	Senior HHS Official Seeks to Influence CDC MMWR on Coronavirus Prevention. The Select Subcommittee’s investigation shows that Dr. Alexander wrote to Assistant Secretary Caputo, Deputy Assistant Secretary Bill Hall, and other HHS officials seeking to insert language into a CDC MMWR on coronavirus prevention. Mr. Hall wrote back that “as a matter of long-standing policy, we do not engage in clearing scientific articles, as that arena needs to remain an independent process.” ⁵¹ Ignoring this senior career official, Dr. Alexander began reaching out to CDC officials directly, attempting to alter or influence the contents of at least eleven other MMWRs. ⁵²
29.	June 15, 2020	The Administration Tells Governors to Repeat Misleading Claims About Outbreak. The <i>New York Times</i> reports Vice President Pence encouraged governors to adopt the Administration’s inaccurate claim that a recent increase in cases was due to increased testing. The Vice President went on to “encourage people with the news that we’re safely reopening the country.” At this time, many states were experiencing surges in cases. ⁵³
30.	June 15, 2020	HHS Political Appointee Seeks to Release “Positive” News on Pandemic to Influence Election Strategy. An email obtained by the Select Subcommittee shows that HHS officials discussed public health messaging related to the coronavirus in the context of an election strategy, with Dr. Alexander asserting: “The population will go to the polls in Nov and make decisions and vote based on ‘common-sense’...this will come down to a ‘common-sense’ election.” In the email, Dr. Alexander called for leaders to make “positive statements” about the coronavirus response and advised, “don’t just spout facts, it gets lost.” ⁵⁴
31.	June 16, 2020	The Administration Publicly Claims Reopening Is Safe While Senior HHS Advisor Privately Admits Reopening Leads to More Cases. Vice President Pence wrote an op-ed published in the <i>Wall Street Journal</i> stating that “panic” over a second wave of infections “is overblown” and that “all 50 states have begun to reopen in a safe and responsible manner.” ⁵⁵ The Select Subcommittee’s investigation shows that, one week later, Dr. Alexander wrote an email to HHS officials acknowledging: “We always knew as you relax and open up, cases will rise...” ⁵⁶

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32.	June 20, 2020	HHS Political Appointee “Toned Down” CDC Statement. In an email obtained by the Select Subcommittee, Dr. Alexander told Assistant Secretary Caputo that he revised a draft CDC statement on the suspension of passenger cruise ship travel in a way that “toned it down,” after Mr. Caputo claimed the draft could “frighten readers.” ⁵⁷
33.	June 22, 2020	CDC Weakens Its Mail-in Voting Guidance. The <i>New York Times</i> reports that CDC quietly changed its guidance on voting during the pandemic. As of March 9, 2020, CDC’s elections website specifically recommended that election officials: “Encourage mail-in methods of voting if allowed in the jurisdiction.” Around June 22, CDC updated its elections guidance, removing any mention of mail-in voting as a safer alternative to in-person voting and instead highlighting risks of mail-in voting. ⁵⁸
34.	June 22, 2020	Senior HHS Official Seeks to Influence CDC MMWR on Adult Patient Characteristics. The Select Subcommittee’s investigation shows that Dr. Alexander emailed a CDC official to suggest changes to an MMWR regarding characteristics of adults with coronavirus, in an attempt to downplay the number of patients who had no known close contacts with someone positive for the virus. ⁵⁹
35.	June 22, 2020	The Administration Ends Funding for 13 Testing Sites. After President Trump announced his intention to “slow the testing down” at a June 20 rally, the Administration announced that its funding and support for 13 testing centers in Texas, Colorado, Illinois, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania would end on June 30. The Administration refused requests from local officials to open testing sites in hotspots, but later reversed course and kept a few sites in Texas open until the end of July. ⁶⁰
36.	June 23, 2020 – January 2021	The White House Issues Secret Public Health Recommendations to States. The Select Subcommittee’s investigation shows that the White House Coronavirus Task Force sent private reports to state and local governments warning about surges in new coronavirus infections and making recommendations to improve states’ responses to the pandemic. The Trump White House refused to publicly support many of these private recommendations, including requiring face masks, closing bars and gyms, and strictly limiting gatherings. ⁶¹

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37.	June 27, 2020	HHS Political Appointee Attempts to Retaliate Against Career CDC Official. Emails obtained by the Select Subcommittee show that a <i>CNN</i> reporter asked Assistant Secretary Caputo whether “Operation Warp Speed is working on a vaccine education campaign.” Mr. Caputo refused to confirm the story, claiming it was “wildly incorrect.” The <i>CNN</i> reporter replied, noting that a career CDC official had referred them to Mr. Caputo and indicated that Mr. Caputo was “spearheading” the campaign. Mr. Caputo then excoriated the career official for providing truthful information to <i>CNN</i> , writing: “In what world did you think it was your job to announce an Administration public service announcement campaign to CNN?” Mr. Caputo later followed up, stating: “We will discuss this on a teleconference tomorrow. I want your HR representative in attendance.” ⁶²
38.	June 28, 2020	The Administration Pressures CDC to Downplay Risks to Pregnant Women. The <i>Washington Post</i> reports that Dr. Alexander wrote an email to CDC Director Redfield accusing CDC of “undermining the President” by putting out an accurate report warning about the potential risks to pregnant women from the coronavirus. The email noted that the guidance “reads in a way to frighten women ... as if the President and his administration can’t fix this and it is getting worse.” ⁶³
39.	June 29, 2020	Senior HHS Officials Seek to Influence CDC MMWR on Hydroxychloroquine Prescription Trends. CDC Senior Advisor Witkofsky sent senior HHS officials a copy of a planned June 30 MMWR, ⁶⁴ which found that prescriptions for hydroxychloroquine—lauded by President Trump as a “miracle” treatment for the coronavirus, despite a lack of evidence for its efficacy—increased 80-fold between March 2019 and March 2020. ⁶⁵ Dr. Alexander sent an email to Assistant Secretary Caputo and Ms. Witkofsky, stating, “is this not the article we were shelving?” ⁶⁶ The following day, a staffer in Mr. Caputo’s office wrote to Ms. Witkofsky, making clear that political appointees intended to make changes to the MMWR. ⁶⁷ <i>Politico</i> reports that this MMWR was held for about a month after Mr. Caputo’s team raised questions about its authors’ political leanings. The report was finally released on September 4. ⁶⁸

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40.	June 30, 2020	Political Appointees Target Top CDC Scientist Following an Interview. Dr. Alexander emailed Assistant Secretary Caputo a scathing critique of scientifically accurate statements about the coronavirus made by CDC Principal Deputy Director Anne Schuchat during an interview. Dr. Alexander accused Dr. Schuchat of trying to “embarrass the President here” and claimed that “It is very false her statement that it causes death in children.” ⁶⁹ On October 2, Secretary Azar told the Select Subcommittee: “I do not support” Dr. Alexander’s statements. ⁷⁰
41.	Early July 2020	The Administration Attacks Dr. Fauci for Sharing Contrary Views on Reopening. <i>CNN</i> reports that the White House made a concerted effort to discredit Dr. Fauci after he expressed concerns over reopening the country amid a national surge in coronavirus cases. “One senior administration official told <i>CNN</i> that some officials within the White House do not trust Fauci. According to the source, those officials think Fauci doesn’t have the best interest of the President.” ⁷¹ After President Trump claimed Dr. Fauci “made a lot of mistakes,” ⁷² Assistant to the President Peter Navarro, who has no public health expertise, published an op-ed in <i>USA Today</i> stating that Dr. Fauci “has been wrong about everything I have interacted with him on.” ⁷³ Emails obtained by the Select Subcommittee show that Dr. Alexander complained in a July 3 email that Dr. Fauci had warned the public to “expect a dramatic increase in spread” and continued: “He just wont stop!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! He cant keep quiet....” ⁷⁴ The following day, Dr. Alexander asked HHS staff to “stop Fauci from talking” to the press. ⁷⁵
42.	July 2020	President Trump Overrules CDC on School Reopening Guidance. President Trump pushed for schools to fully reopen, even though CDC guidance warned that “Full sized, in-person classes” presented the “Highest Risk” of transmitting coronavirus to students, teachers, and community members. ⁷⁶ CDC then issued revised guidelines on July 23 titled, “The Importance of Reopening of America’s Schools this Fall,” that were “substantially edited by White House officials” and included misleading language downplaying the risks, over the objection of CDC scientists. ⁷⁷ Senior White House staff, including White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, National Economic Council Director Larry Kudlow, Mr. Kushner, and Mr. Miller, were involved in the review process. ⁷⁸ The revised guidelines were removed from CDC’s website on October 29. In March 2021, an internal review conducted by CDC found that these guidelines were “developed or finalized outside of the agency.” ⁷⁹

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43.	July – August 2020	President Trump Pressures Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to Review Oleandrin as a Potential Coronavirus Treatment. <i>Axios</i> reports that President Trump pressured FDA to review the unproven botanical extract as a potential coronavirus cure, after a meeting with Phoenix Biotechnology Vice Chairman Andrew Whitney arranged by My Pillow founder and CEO Mike Lindell, a supporter of President Trump’s campaign. ⁸⁰
44.	July – August 2020	The Administration Installs Partisans in Nonpolitical FDA Posts. <i>Stat News</i> reports that President Trump installed a number of political operatives—some lacking scientific backgrounds—to key positions at FDA that are typically filled by nonpolitical civil servants. ⁸¹
45.	July 2020 – January 2021	Trump Administration Officials Pursue Dangerous Herd Immunity Strategy. The Select Subcommittee’s investigation reveals that a senior HHS official promoted a misguided “herd immunity” strategy of allowing the virus to spread among the United States prior to the development and administration of vaccines. ⁸² The <i>Washington Post</i> also reports that Special Advisor to the President Scott Atlas advocated for pursuing a herd immunity strategy after joining the White House in August. ⁸³ <i>BuzzFeed</i> published an August 21 email from Dr. Birx where she conveyed concerns about “the dangers of Dr. Atlas’ views on the pandemic” to Dr. Fauci, FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn, and CDC Director Redfield. ⁸⁴ Shortly thereafter, President Trump expressed his support of herd immunity in an August 31 interview: “Once you get to a certain number, you know—we use the word herd, right? Once you get to a certain number, it’s going to go away.” ⁸⁵ On October 5, Secretary Azar and Dr. Atlas met privately with proponents of a herd immunity approach. Following the meeting, Secretary Azar tweeted: “We heard strong reinforcement of the Trump Administration’s strategy of aggressively protecting the vulnerable while opening schools and the workplace.” ⁸⁶
46.	July 10, 2020	The Administration Redirects Hospitalization Data Away from CDC. The <i>New York Times</i> reports that the Administration abruptly directed hospitals across the country to stop sending data on coronavirus hospitalizations to the CDC platform that hospitals had used to report data for over a decade, and instead to report the data directly to HHS through a new portal maintained by a private company. ⁸⁷ CDC Director Redfield testified to the Select Subcommittee that he “wasn’t involved in the decision” to transfer the data away from CDC and that “the Secretary’s office made the decision.” ⁸⁸

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47.	July 12, 2020	Senior HHS Official Seeks to Influence CDC MMWR on Cloth Face Coverings. Dr. Alexander emailed career CDC staff proposed changes to the findings of an MMWR on the use of cloth face coverings that misstated conclusions about the usage of face coverings among different subpopulations. A career CDC official subsequently replied to Dr. Alexander stating, “The results from the time period do not show the points you made in your suggested edits.” ⁸⁹
48.	July 15 – 17, 2020	HHS Political Appointee Threatens Career CDC Staff for Sharing Accurate Information on Hospital Data Collection. Emails obtained by the Select Subcommittee show that Assistant Secretary Caputo retaliated against career CDC officials after <i>NPR</i> interviewed Dr. Daniel Pollock, a senior CDC scientist, regarding the Administration’s decision to strip CDC of its longstanding role in collecting hospital data. ⁹⁰ When Mr. Caputo learned that the interview took place without his personal permission, he called the action “reckless” and demanded to know the name of the CDC press officer who arranged it, warning CDC’s senior staff: “If you disobey my directions, you will be held accountable.” ⁹¹
49.	July 23, 2020	Senior HHS Official Seeks to Influence CDC MMWR on Efforts to Mitigate Virus Transmission During Milwaukee Primary Election. Dr. Alexander emailed a suggested edit to an upcoming MMWR on voting in Wisconsin, stating: “I added a condition statement in red that I think is missing which is the good news or ‘finding’ from this study.” A career CDC official later replied that, “the available data in the report does not support your suggested addition.” ⁹²
50.	July 23, 2020	Senior HHS Official Seeks to Influence CDC MMWR on Vaccinations Among Children in New York City. Dr. Alexander emailed suggested changes to an MMWR on routine vaccinations among children in New York City to emphasize that an increase in vaccinations could not be attributed to the mayor’s advocacy for vaccinations at a news conference later in the Spring. ⁹³

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51.	July 27, 2020	Senior HHS Officials Seek to Influence CDC MMWR on Coronavirus Spread in Children. Dr. Alexander provided an eight-point list of questions and comments on a draft MMWR regarding a coronavirus outbreak at a Georgia summer camp, asserting that the report would undermine the Administration’s push to quickly reopen schools. He wrote: “I find it incredible this piece would be put out the way it is written at a time when CDC and its leader Dr. Redfield is [sic] trying to showcase the school re-open guidance and the push is to help schools re-open safely. It just sends the wrong message as written and actually reads as if to send a message of NOT to re-open.” ⁹⁴ After a career CDC official agreed to remove references to schools and colleges from the MMWR, Dr. Alexander celebrated his influence over this report, stating in an email to Assistant Secretary Caputo: “small victory but a victory nonetheless and yippee!!!” ⁹⁵
52.	July 29, 2020	HHS Official Suggests Blame Should Be Shifted from the Administration to Scientists. Dr. Alexander wrote to senior HHS officials regarding concern over a CDC study linking 38 percent of the earliest reported coronavirus cases in the Americas to travel in Italy, suggesting it “can be used to damage the administration.” Dr. Alexander’s suggested rebuttal to potential bad press was to shift blame to scientists who he claimed “failed to properly advise on border closures with Fauci...these people failed the nation. Regardless of if they are helping now to fix it, this is due to their failures.” ⁹⁶
53.	July 31, 2020	Release of CDC MMWR Delayed Until After CDC Director Redfield Testified Before Congress. The Select Subcommittee’s investigation reveals that publication of an MMWR regarding coronavirus transmission at a Georgia summer camp was purposefully delayed for two days at Dr. Redfield’s instruction—moving the release date from July 29 to July 31—so that it would not be released until after Dr. Redfield testified at a July 31 Select Subcommittee hearing. ⁹⁷
54.	August 2020	President Trump Criticizes NIH for Moving Too Slowly on Vaccines and Therapeutics. The <i>Washington Post</i> reports that the President accused NIH of moving too slowly to approve a vaccine or other treatments, including convalescent plasma, during an August call with NIH Director Francis Collins. ⁹⁸

	Date	Political Interference
55.	August 2020	President Trump Rebukes Dr. Birx for Advising Americans to Take Safety Precautions. The <i>Washington Post</i> reports that White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Dr. Birx was personally rebuked by President Trump after sharing accurate information about the spread of the virus in a <i>CNN</i> interview and warning that Americans needed to take strict safety precautions because the virus was “extraordinarily widespread.” ⁹⁹ Dr. Birx recounted that after the interview, she had a “very uncomfortable” call with President Trump who “felt very strongly that I misrepresented the pandemic in the United States, that I made it out to be much worse than it is.” ¹⁰⁰ Dr. Birx acknowledged that she subsequently was “censored” by the Trump White House and blocked from national media appearances. ¹⁰¹
56.	August – September 2020	The Administration Pressures Dr. Fauci to Echo Administration Talking Points on Children and the Coronavirus. <i>Politico</i> reports that Dr. Alexander repeatedly attempted to pressure Dr. Fauci and other NIH officials to adopt the Administration’s talking points. On August 27, Dr. Alexander made clear that he objected to Dr. Fauci’s planned interview responses, stating: “I continue to have an issue with kids getting tested and repeatedly and even university students in a widespread manner... and I disagree with Dr. Fauci on this. Vehemently.” On September 8, Dr. Alexander asked Dr. Fauci’s press team, “Can you ensure Dr. Fauci indicates masks are for the teachers in schools. Not for children.” ¹⁰²
57.	August – September 2020	Senior Administration Officials Allow Dangerous Political Interference to Continue Until Extent of Interference Publicly Revealed. Emails show Administration officials were aware that Assistant Secretary Caputo and Dr. Alexander interfered with career scientists for months but took no action until the press became aware of this behavior and the Select Subcommittee launched an investigation. For example, Ms. Witkofsky—a top advisor to CDC Director Redfield who became Acting Chief of Staff in August 2020—worked closely with Mr. Caputo and Dr. Alexander to facilitate their efforts to obtain, review, and edit MMWRs prior to their release. ¹⁰³ Both Dr. Redfield and Ms. Witkofsky were copied on multiple emails in which Dr. Alexander attempted to alter MMWRs and Mr. Caputo bullied CDC career staff. ¹⁰⁴ However, no action was taken against Mr. Caputo or Dr. Alexander until their disgraceful conduct became public and the Select Subcommittee launched an investigation into these incidents.

	Date	Political Interference
58.	August 2, 2020	The White House Exerts Political Pressure to Finish Vaccine Before Election Day. The <i>New York Times</i> reports that Mr. Kushner directly pressured Secretary Azar to accelerate the vaccine development process, and that the White House insisted on the production of a vaccine by October 2020, prior to Election Day. ¹⁰⁵
59.	August 5, 2020	Senior HHS Official Seeks to Influence CDC MMWR on Multi-Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) with Coronavirus. Dr. Alexander wrote to CDC officials regarding an upcoming MMWR on MIS-C, stating: “I point you to more recent research released on July 30 th distinguishing between COVID, MIS-C, and Kawasaki.” ¹⁰⁶ In prior emails, Dr. Alexander repeatedly dismissed evidence regarding the link between MIS-C and the coronavirus, including suggesting that children may have died from another inflammatory disease—such as Kawasaki Syndrome—that is unrelated to the coronavirus. ¹⁰⁷
60.	August 5, 2020	Senior HHS Official Seeks to Influence CDC MMWR on Coronavirus Hospitalization Rates for Children. Dr. Alexander sought to make changes to a draft MMWR to emphasize medical outcomes of what happened to children who were hospitalized with the coronavirus. In his email, Dr. Alexander downplayed the risk to children, stating: “The data is clear globally and in the US that children are at very little risk of getting COVID virus, and when they do, it is very mild if any symptoms, and they recover very well, almost entirely.” ¹⁰⁸
61.	August 8, 2020	An HHS Political Appointee Demands CDC Alter or Retract Scientific Articles on Children. In an email to CDC Director Redfield and other Administration officials, Dr. Alexander called on CDC to insert new language in an MMWR or “pull it down and stop all reports immediately.” He also wrote: “CDC tried to report as if once kids get together, there will be spread and this will impact school re-opening. Very misleading by CDC and shame on them. Their aim is clear. ... This is designed to hurt this President for their reasons which I am not interested in.” ¹⁰⁹ On October 2, Secretary Azar disavowed Dr. Alexander’s statements in testimony before the Select Subcommittee. ¹¹⁰

	Date	Political Interference
62.	August 8, 2020	<p>An HHS Political Appointee Demands Changes to MMWR Publication Process to Allow for Political Interference. In the same email, Dr. Alexander called on CDC Director Redfield to put an “immediate stop” to all new MMWRs, so that the agency could change its publication process to allow for Dr. Alexander to personally review the reports before publication.</p> <p>Dr. Alexander stated, “The reports must be read by someone outside of CDC like myself, and we cannot allow the reporting to go on as it has been, for it is outrageous. Its [sic] lunacy.” He further stated: “Nothing to go out unless I read and agree with the findings how they CDC, wrote it and I tweak it to ensure it is fair and balanced and ‘complete.’”¹¹¹</p>
63.	August 9, 2020	<p>CDC Director Instructs Career Official to Delete Evidence of Political Interference. A career CDC official told Select Subcommittee staff that she was instructed to delete an August 8, email sent by Dr. Alexander, which showed evidence of political interference in CDC’s MMWRs. The official stated that she understood the direction came from CDC Director Redfield and that when she went to delete the email from her inbox, it had already been deleted by an unknown party.¹¹²</p>
64.	August 23, 2020	<p>FDA Grants an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for Convalescent Plasma Over the Objections of Top Scientists, While Citing Misleading Evidence. The <i>New York Times</i> and <i>Washington Post</i> report that the EUA for convalescent plasma occurred over the objections of Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins, who believed insufficient data was available to determine if convalescent plasma provided a benefit.¹¹³ FDA’s EUA qualified the preliminary findings regarding convalescent plasma and called for clinical trials.¹¹⁴ FDA rushed the EUA over objections to appease President Trump, who had expressed frustration that FDA was not moving quickly enough to develop coronavirus treatments. FDA Commissioner Hahn later apologized, and the FDA’s chief spokesperson was removed after it became clear that Dr. Hahn, along with President Trump and Secretary Azar, cited grossly inaccurate statistics on the effectiveness of plasma therapy at a press conference.¹¹⁵</p>

	Date	Political Interference
65.	August 24, 2020	The Administration Alters CDC Testing Guidelines. CDC abruptly changed its testing guidelines to assert, contrary to the scientific consensus, that most asymptomatic individuals exposed to a person with the virus did not need to be tested. <i>CNN</i> asked a senior CDC official whether this change was made at the direction of the White House or HHS, and the official stated, “It’s coming from the top down.” ¹¹⁶ According to an internal email obtained by the Select Subcommittee, the Trump Administration changed the guidance to avoid identifying infections among “low risk” people, because the tests were causing infected people to quarantine—which was “preventing the workforce from working” and would not allow schools and colleges to “optimally re-open.” ¹¹⁷ CDC’s original guidance was later restored on September 18, after the Select Subcommittee and others objected. ¹¹⁸
66.	August 24, 2020	President Trump Accuses the “Deep State” FDA of Slowing Vaccine Trials Until After Election. After repeatedly suggesting that a coronavirus vaccine may be released before Election Day, President Trump accused FDA officials of attempting to undermine his electoral prospects, tweeting: “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” ¹¹⁹
67.	August 24, 2020	Senior HHS Official Seeks to Influence CDC MMWR on Coronavirus Outbreaks at Summer Camps. Dr. Alexander sent career CDC staff suggestions on how the data in an upcoming MMWR should be broken down and presented in the final report. Dr. Alexander also asked CDC Director Redfield if there “any way we can collaborate to ensure that the MMWRs are balanced and reflective within this Covid emergency.” In a follow up to a career official at CDC, Dr. Alexander expressed his desire to have a larger influence on MMWRs, asking: “...is there a scope for us to collaborate? For us at ASPA to be more involved in your reports?” ¹²⁰
68.	August 28, 2020	HHS Cancels Contract of Consultant Who Advised FDA to Correct Misleading Statements. <i>Politico</i> reports that HHS canceled the contract of consultant Wayne Pines after he advised FDA Commissioner Hahn to correct misleading statements made regarding the effectiveness of plasma therapy. HHS officials were reportedly angered by Dr. Hahn’s apology and began the process of severing Mr. Pines’ contract after learning that he aided the decision, with one official stating that Mr. Pines’ removal was “not routine.” ¹²¹

	Date	Political Interference
69.	August 31, 2020	The Administration Redirects \$265 Million from CDC and FDA Budgets for a “Boondoggle” PR Campaign to “Defeat Despair” Before Election. <i>Politico</i> reports the ad campaign—which Assistant Secretary Caputo said was directly ordered by President Trump—sought to release an ad blitz before Election Day featuring senior Administration officials and celebrities and highlighting the Administration’s pandemic response. ¹²² The <i>New York Times</i> reports that CDC was not consulted on the substance of the campaign. ¹²³ HHS directed a subcontract to a former business partner of Mr. Caputo. An HHS official called the effort a “boondoggle.” ¹²⁴ After the Select Subcommittee launched an investigation, Secretary Azar testified before the Select Subcommittee on October 2, “I have ordered a strategic review of this public health education campaign that will be led by top HHS public health and communication experts to determine whether the campaign serves important public health purposes.” ¹²⁵ On November 13, HHS informed Congress that it had canceled the subcontract with Mr. Caputo’s former business partner. ¹²⁶
70.	Late August 2020	HHS Overrides FDA and Increases the Risk of Inaccurate Coronavirus Tests Flooding the Market. <i>Politico</i> reports that Secretary Azar overruled objections from FDA Commissioner Hahn to revoke the FDA’s ability to check the quality of tests developed by labs for their own use. The decision removed safeguards designed to prevent inaccurate tests from flooding the market during a public health crisis. A former HHS official told <i>Politico</i> that, “I’ve never seen such a complete political overruling of the agency.” ¹²⁷
71.	September 2020	White House Blocks Order Requiring Masks on Public and Commercial Transit. The <i>New York Times</i> reports that the White House Coronavirus Task Force blocked an order drafted by CDC requiring all passengers and employees to wear masks on all forms of public and commercial transportation, including airplanes, trains, buses, and subways, and in transit hubs such as airports, train stations, and bus depots. ¹²⁸ CDC ultimately issued guidance on October 19 that strongly recommends the use of masks on public transit. ¹²⁹

	Date	Political Interference
72.	September 2020	Political Appointees Seek to Release Op-Eds to Rebut CDC Scientific Guidance and Reports Related to Children. Emails released by the Select Subcommittee show that senior Trump Administration officials coordinated to draft op-eds to publicly rebut CDC scientific guidance and reports seen to be damaging to the Administration. For instance, on September 11, Dr. Alexander emailed Dr. Atlas about a forthcoming MMWR on coronavirus deaths in young people, which Dr. Alexander claimed was “very duplicitous to damage the administration.” He asked Dr. Atlas to help “craft an op-ed ... disputing the reporting for on face value, it is meant to mislead.” ¹³⁰
73.	September 2, 2020	President Trump Undermines FDA Independence on Vaccine Approval. FDA announced guidelines to be followed before authorizing a vaccine-related EUA, including a minimum two-month period after a clinical trial and five cases of severe coronavirus in the placebo group. ¹³¹ President Trump rejected the FDA’s attempt to implement a rigorous vaccine approval process, asserting without evidence that the plan “sounds like a political move” and that it “has to be approved by the White House. We may or may not approve it.” ¹³² The <i>New York Times</i> reported that top White House officials were blocking the guidelines and that, on September 23, Mr. Meadows “questioned the need for two months of follow-up data” and “suggested that Dr. Hahn was overly influenced by his agency’s career scientists.” ¹³³ On October 6, FDA released the guidance. ¹³⁴ Secretary Azar reportedly considered firing Dr. Hahn after he “began to defy Trump and Azar by beginning to aggressively and publicly push back on the idea of approving a vaccine prematurely” and “supported [Director of FDA’s Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research] Peter Marks on releasing stricter standards for vaccine approval.” ¹³⁵
74.	September 6, 2020	The White House Weakens the White House Coronavirus Task Force Public Health Recommendations. After months of recommending that states with active outbreaks implement mask mandates, close bars and gyms, and strictly limit gatherings, an analysis by the Select Subcommittee shows the Task Force weakened its recommendations in states where the virus was still spreading rapidly. ¹³⁶

	Date	Political Interference
75.	September 6, 2020	Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Pressures CDC to Alter Guidance for Bars and Restaurants. The <i>Wall Street Journal</i> reports that OMB Director Russell Vought and other OMB officials urged CDC Director Redfield to remove or change social distancing guidance to bars and restaurants. The final version retained a recommendation to social distance but removed more specific language advising people to stay six feet apart if possible. ¹³⁷
76.	September 11, 2020	Senior HHS Official Seeks to Influence CDC MMWR on Mortality Rates in Children. Dr. Alexander pressured CDC staff to alter an MMWR regarding death rates from the coronavirus in children. Dr. Alexander wrote to a career CDC official claiming that defining teenagers aged 18 and older as “pediatric” was “misleading,” asserting that the document conflated the risks of the coronavirus to young children and older adolescents, and calling for multiple revisions. The final version published on September 15 contained revisions in line with those sought by Dr. Alexander. ¹³⁸
77.	September 15, 2020	Secretary Azar’s “Power Grab” Restricts the Authority of FDA and Other Health Agencies. The <i>New York Times</i> reports that Secretary Azar signed a memorandum prohibiting FDA and other health agencies from signing any new rules regarding medicines, medical devices, and other products, writing that the power to do so “is reserved to the Secretary.” Some experts called this move a “power grab” by HHS designed to send a signal to President Trump that no “surprises” would come from FDA before the election. ¹³⁹
78.	September 16, 2020	President Trump Publicly Rebukes Dr. Redfield on Mask and Vaccine Effectiveness. The <i>New York Times</i> reports that President Trump publicly rebuked CDC Director Redfield after he testified that a vaccine may not be widely available until Summer 2021 or later and that face masks may be “more guaranteed” to protect against the coronavirus than a vaccine with a low efficacy rate. President Trump stated that Dr. Redfield’s comments contained “incorrect information.” Subsequently, Dr. Redfield and CDC issued statements walking back Dr. Redfield’s testimony to more closely align with the President’s views. ¹⁴⁰

	Date	Political Interference
79.	September 21, 2020	The Administration Removed a Report on Airborne Transmission from CDC’s Website. On Friday, September 18, new guidance appeared on CDC’s website concluding that the coronavirus is transmitted through small particles in the air. By Monday, September 21, this guidance was removed. The sudden appearance and disappearance of scientific information raised concerns that officials may have found the conclusions politically inconvenient. ¹⁴¹ On October 5, CDC published a statement on its website citing new evidence that the virus can “sometimes be spread by airborne transmission” beyond six feet indoors. However, the new guidance softened a previous statement referring to the coronavirus as “an airborne virus” and stated that it is much more common for the virus to spread through close contact with an infected person than through airborne transmission. ¹⁴²
80.	September 29, 2020	The Vice President Overrules the CDC Director on Extending Cruise Ship Ban. <i>Axios</i> reports that CDC Director Redfield was overruled by Vice President Pence when he pushed to extend a no-sail order on passenger cruises until February 2021: “Public health officials have privately complained that the thwarting of Redfield on the cruise ship ban is politically motivated because the industry is a major economic presence in Florida—a key battleground state where the polls are statistically tied.” ¹⁴³
81.	Early October 2020	President Trump Pressures FDA to Grant EUAs for Antibody Treatments. The <i>Washington Post</i> reports that President Trump and Mr. Meadows pushed FDA Commissioner Hahn to accelerate the agency’s review and grant EUAs for monoclonal antibody treatments made by Regeneron and Eli Lilly & Co. A senior official told the <i>Washington Post</i> that Dr. Hahn received multiple calls from the White House in early October, saying: “The message is clear. Let’s get it done.” On October 8, President Trump claimed that the Regeneron drug is a “cure” and “a gift from heaven” and stated, “We’re going to make them available immediately; we have an emergency use authorization that I want to get signed immediately.” ¹⁴⁴
82.	October 2020	The Trump Administration Pressures FDA to Call a Vaccine EUA “Pre-Licensure.” <i>Politico</i> reports that officials at HHS pressured FDA to alter the agency’s terminology to refer to an emergency use authorization of a vaccine as a “pre-licensure”—despite concerns that such terminology might confuse the public. FDA Commissioner Hahn reportedly resisted the change in terminology, but <i>Politico</i> reported that “some believe the White House could still get involved and demand changes.” ¹⁴⁵

	Date	Political Interference
83.	October 2020	White House Aides Press Dr. Slaoui to Echo Administration Talking Points on Vaccines. The <i>Washington Post</i> reports that White House aides pressured Dr. Slaoui to speak more positively about vaccines. Two officials told the <i>Washington Post</i> that Dr. Slaoui sometimes pushed back on the Administration’s talking points. ¹⁴⁶
84.	October 2020	The Administration Pressures CDC to Endorse the Use of Border Hotels to Hold Migrant Children. The <i>Washington Post</i> reports that the Trump Administration pressured career CDC officials to sign a legal declaration affirming that the use of hotels to detain migrant children is the best way to protect them from the spread of the coronavirus—even though experts stated that this is inaccurate. According to the <i>Washington Post</i> , CDC officials in several different offices declined to sign the declaration, and the request was sent to CDC Director Redfield, who reportedly signed it. ¹⁴⁷
85.	October 6, 2020	NIH Sidelines Dr. Bright and Rejects National Coronavirus Testing Strategy. The <i>New York Times</i> reports that on October 6, Dr. Bright resigned from NIH—where he was transferred following his ouster from BARDA—after the Administration sidelined him and refused to give him meaningful work. Dr. Bright accused NIH of rejecting his proposal to develop a robust national testing infrastructure, including a plan to greatly expand testing of asymptomatic people, “because of political considerations.” ¹⁴⁸ In an interview with <i>NBC News</i> , Dr. Bright stated that Dr. Collins praised his “great ideas” but told him he could not put them forward out of fear of “stepping on the toes of others in the administration who may not be ready for that.” Dr. Bright stated: “The political interference has not stopped at all. I believe it’s intensified.” ¹⁴⁹
86.	October 11, 2020	White House Blocks White House Coronavirus Task Force Members from Television Appearances. <i>Huffington Post</i> reports that the White House blocked Dr. Fauci and other Task Force members from appearing on multiple television news programs. ¹⁵⁰ These rejections came shortly after Dr. Fauci stated, “We had a superspreader event in the White House,” ¹⁵¹ and amid reports that he did not consent to being featured in a new Trump campaign ad touting the President’s response to the coronavirus crisis. ¹⁵² On October 13, President Trump publicly disparaged Dr. Fauci, tweeting, “Actually, Tony’s pitching arm is far more accurate than his prognostications.” ¹⁵³

	Date	Political Interference
87.	December 11, 2020	Trump Pressures FDA Commissioner to Authorize Vaccine. Amid reports that FDA was imminently planning to issue an EUA for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, President Trump ordered FDA Commissioner Hahn via Twitter to “stop playing games and start saving lives,” adding: “Get the dam [sic] vaccines out NOW, Dr. Hahn.” Earlier that morning, Mr. Meadows reportedly told Dr. Hahn in a telephone call that Dr. Hahn would be out of a job if he did not authorize the vaccine that day. ¹⁵⁴ FDA issued the EUA on the evening of December 11, reportedly a day earlier than planned. ¹⁵⁵
88.	Late December 2020	White House Coronavirus Task Force Stops Sending Weekly State Reports. As coronavirus cases were surging across the country, the White House stopped automatically sending copies of the Task Force’s weekly reports with tailored data and recommendations to state and local public health officials. Trump Administration officials instead required officials to affirmatively request the reports each week. ¹⁵⁶

ENDNOTES

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