



Rand Paul gives 2-word response to Fauci's unearthed emails

Description

USA: Fauci dismissed the 'lab-leak theory' in emails from the spring of 2020

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Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., shared two words in response to news of unearthed emails from Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Thousands of emails obtained by BuzzFeed News and hundreds more reviewed by The Washington Post through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests show Fauci's responses to both critiques and high praise as he worked to communicate the dangers of COVID-19 to the U.S. as director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

"Told you," Paul wrote in a Tuesday tweet with the hashtag #firefauci.

He added in another tweet: "Can't wait to see the media try to spin the Fauci FOIA emails."

Paul has repeatedly criticized Fauci on social media and in interviews for his comments on herd immunity, wearing masks even after getting the COVID-19 vaccine and his dismissal of a theory suggesting COVID-19 may have originated from the Wuhan Institute of Virology in China that has gained more credibility among members of the media in recent weeks despite early snubbing of the idea.

Paul has also condemned Fauci's claim made during a May 25 congressional hearing that a \$600,000 federal grant from NIAID did not directly fund the lab's gain of function research, which is research that involves modifying a virus to make it more infectious among humans.

The grant went to a group called EcoHealth Alliance, which then paid the Wuhan Institute of Virology to study the risk that bat coronaviruses could infect humans.



[Video](#)

Francis Collins, the director of NIH, said earlier in the hearing that the taxpayer-funded grant to EcoHealth and the Wuhan Institute of Virology was not approved to conduct gain of function research.

Some Republicans, including Paul, maintain that NIAID money under Fauci's purview did in fact go to the Wuhan Institute of Virology to conduct gain of function research, which raises ethical, safety and security concerns, according to some politicians and scientists.

"Fauci acknowledged that a gain of function super virus could escape a lab and cause a pandemic, but that it is worth the risk. His naïveté should disqualify him from government service," Paul wrote in a May 28 tweet responding to Fauci's comments during the House Appropriations Committee subcommittee hearing.

Collins dismissed the so-called "lab leak theory" as a "conspiracy" in an April email to Fauci obtained by Buzzfeed.

In an April 17 email obtained by the outlet, Fauci said coronavirus mutations that led to COVID-19 are “totally consistent with a jump of a species from an animal to a human” rather than a lab leak.

Peter Daszak, president of EcoHealth, personally thanked Fauci for supporting “evidence” that COVID-19 came from an animal rather than the Wuhan lab in an April 18, 2020, emails obtained by Buzzfeed show.

“I just wanted to say a personal thank you on behalf of our staff and collaborators, for publicly standing up and stating that the scientific evidence supports a natural origin for COVID-19 from a bat-to-human spillover, not a lab release from the Wuhan Institute of Virology,” Daszak wrote to Fauci.



Security personnel gather near the entrance of the Wuhan Institute of Virology during a visit by the World Health Organization team in Wuhan in China’s Hubei province on Wednesday, Feb. 3, 2021. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

He praised the NIAID director’s comments as “brave,” saying they will “help dispel the myths being spun around the virus’s origins.”

“Many thanks for your kind note,” Fauci responded.

The NIAID director said during the May 25 House Appropriations Committee subcommittee hearing that he has no objections to an investigation of China’s early handling of the pandemic.

Fauci also said in the emails Buzzfeed released that store-bought masks would not be completely effective in preventing COVID-19.

In a February response to an emailed query about wearing masks while traveling via plane, Fauci said, “Masks are really for infected people to prevent them from spreading infection to people who are not

infected rather than protecting uninfected people from acquiring infection.”

He added that the “typical mask you buy in the drug store is not really effective in keeping out virus, which is small enough to pass through material.”

“It might, however, provide some slight benefit in keep out gross droplets if someone coughs or sneezes on you,” he said, adding, “I do not recommend that you wear a mask, particularly since you are going to a very low risk location.”

The emails show an evolution of Fauci’s thinking and flip-flopping on certain COVID-19-related subjects between the winter and spring of 2020 when the virus first came to the U.S. and the spring of 2021 as infection numbers began to decrease significantly as more and more people received their vaccines.



Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and chief medical adviser to the president, speaks to a group of interfaith clergy members. (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta)

The NIAID director has been praised as a hero among some politicians and pundits and criticized by others for putting out conflicting information.

A May 23 [Wall Street Journal](#) report citing previously undisclosed U.S. intelligence documents that found some of the Wuhan Institute of Virology workers who fell ill in 2019 required hospital care, lending weight to what some have dubbed the “lab-leak theory.”

The State Department [acknowledged](#) in January 2021 the “United States government has reason to believe that several researchers inside the WIV became sick in autumn 2019.” It found that they’d experienced symptoms consistent with both COVID-19 “and common seasonal illness.”

The Wuhan Institute of Virology, which is one of China's top virus research labs, built an archive of genetic information about bat coronaviruses after the 2003 outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome and has faced criticism over its transparency throughout the pandemic.

The Journal reported that the veracity of the intelligence is being debated by current and former officials. At least one told the paper that further analysis is needed since the evidence was provided by foreign contacts. Another source told the paper that the evidence seems to be spot on and "was of exquisite quality."

By Audrey Conklin

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