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COVID-19 RESPONSE

PANEL VOTES TO HOLD FAUCI IN CONTEMPT



KEVIN DIETSCH, GETTY IMAGES

Former NIH Director Anthony Fauci testifies before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing July 29 in Washington.

Committee accuses doctor of failing to obey subpoena

AHMED ABouleinein
Reuters

WASHINGTON — Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., said Thursday he will ask the Justice Department to prosecute Dr. Anthony Fauci for refusing to answer questions about the COVID-19 pandemic after a Senate committee voted to hold the former top infectious disease official in contempt of Congress.

The early morning vote by the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which Paul chairs, went on party lines with Republicans in favor and Democrats opposed. The resolution accuses Fauci of failing to obey a congressional subpoena.

The move followed a hearing last week where Fauci, who retired in 2022 as the head of the national infectious-disease agency and a presidential adviser, invoked his Fifth Amendment constitutional right against self-incrimination more than 100 times.

Paul said he would refer Fauci to the Justice Department, a formal request to



Paul

consider criminal charges, based on the contempt finding. But the senator, a longtime Fauci antagonist, bypassed a referral vote by the full Senate.

He described that step as unnecessary and said his request would be hand delivered to the attorney general Thursday. Democrats said Paul was violating Senate rules by skipping the vote, which would likely fail to achieve the necessary 60-vote majority, and called the move dangerous and unprecedented.

The development was the sharpest escalation yet in a broad Republican and Trump administration campaign to relitigate the pandemic and hold accountable the officials who ran the U.S. response.

Pandemic response

Fauci’s attorney, David Schertler, said Thursday’s vote was “a crude political stunt intended to punish Dr. Fauci for exercising his constitutional rights.”

“Dr. Fauci has committed no crime — and Senator Paul knows it,” Schertler said, describing the resolution as a continuation of a “personal vendetta.”

Paul denied this, saying in his opening statement: “Seeking the truth is not a witch hunt.” He said the committee seeks accountability to prevent “a repeat of the mistakes and the very real consequences of the past.”

Fauci, who led the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases for 38 years, became the face of the U.S. COVID-19 pandemic response and a primary target of anger over measures taken against a virus that killed more than 1.1 million Americans.

Paul and other Republicans pursued a yearslong investigation, including hard-nosed tactics such as publishing Fauci’s daily diary entries and obtaining the contents of his phone, in a bid to prove Republican claims that Fauci orchestrated a cover-up of the coronavirus’ origins.

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Some GOP senators defend filibuster over voter ID bill

Trump pressures legislators to pass sprawling proposal

SAVANNAH BEHRMANN
CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has made his position clear: He wants Senate Republicans to nuke the legislative filibuster and push through a sprawling voter ID bill.

It’s enough to make some Republicans think twice before leaping to the filibuster’s defense, as the arcane details of Senate procedure spark strong emotions and bitter online feuds. But others are taking a different approach.

“I’m going to make myself a T-shirt that says, ‘No, I’m not interested in blowing up the filibuster,’” Sen. Lisa Murkowski of

Alaska joked.

And Sen. John Curtis of Utah drew a line in the sand, writing in a Wall Street Journal opinion piece, “Under no circumstance will I support any effort to end or alter the filibuster, as any party that does so wouldn’t be guaranteed survival.”

“Their agenda would be guaranteed death come the next majority,” he said, defending the tool as critical for preserving debate and compromise in the Senate.

For Majority Leader John Thune, the equation is not new: The math isn’t mathing, and there has never been enough support in his conference to establish a new precedent and lower the 60-vote hurdle most bills must clear to advance to a simple majority threshold.

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JOHN MCDONNELL, GETTY IMAGES NORTH AMERICA

Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Department of Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Chair Lisa Murkowski (R- AK) questions Douglas Burgum, Secretary of the Department of the Interior, on May 21, 2025, in Washington.