



Court: Feds must forgive \$11B in student loan debt

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Senate panel votes to hold Fauci in contempt

Paul argues pardon nullifies Fifth Amendment claim

Zachary Schermele
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – A Republican-led Senate committee voted Aug. 6 to hold Dr. Anthony Fauci, the federal official who led the government’s COVID-19 response in 2020, in contempt of Congress for refusing to answer questions

during a July 29 hearing. The panel advanced the resolution to the full chamber on an 8-5 vote, with two senators also voting no by proxy, to rebuke the infectious disease expert for asserting his Fifth Amendment rights against self-incrimination during congressional testimony. Over several contentious hours during the July 29 hearing before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Fauci was repeatedly pressured by Republican lawmakers to discuss a number of both professionally and personally sensitive

issues, ranging from his actions as the country’s top pandemic expert to his own revealing diary entries. Fauci’s stonewalling, pleading the Fifth more than 100 times, enraged Republicans, most notably committee chair Sen. Rand Paul, R-Kentucky, who accused him of defying Congress. “The sole reason he is calling me before this committee is to get me to say something, anything, that could vindicate his repeated public pledges that I end up, in his words, quote, ‘behind

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Dr. Anthony Fauci is also being investigated for his conduct during the pandemic by Louisiana, Florida and Alabama. NATHAN HOWARD/REUTERS

Iran issues warning to Gulf states



People walk past an anti-U.S. billboard Aug. 3 on a street in Tehran, Iran. MAJID ASGARIPOUR/WEST ASIA NEWS AGENCY VIA REUTERS

Threatens attacks on infrastructure if nations don’t pressure Trump

Parisa Hafezi and Samia Nakhoul
REUTERS

Iran has made a concerted diplomatic push with Persian Gulf states, warning them explicitly that Tehran will hit their oil, power and water plants unless they convince President Donald Trump to end U.S. strikes on Iran and instead seek a negotiated end to the war. The warning envisaged attacks on the energy facilities, oil fields, refineries, electricity grids, water infrastructure, transportation networks and other strategic assets of Washington’s closest Arab allies, according to a senior Iranian official. The message, part of a broader Iranian effort to deter further U.S. military action by raising the prospect of severe economic disruption across the Gulf, was delivered through a flurry of high-

level diplomatic contacts after Trump threatened on July 28 to strike Iran’s energy network and infrastructure, the sources said. Two senior Iranian officials, two Gulf sources and a senior regional diplomat with knowledge of the discussions said Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi spoke with his Saudi, Turkish and Qatari counterparts, as well as Pakistan’s army chief. All spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter. Araqchi urged Washington’s Gulf allies to use their influence with Trump to dissuade him from launching renewed strikes, the senior diplomat said, warning that any attack on Iran would prompt retaliation against U.S. assets and critical infrastructure across the Gulf. His message was consistent in every conversation, the diplomat said: “We’re ready to retaliate, but finding a diplomatic solution is the best way to avoid wider escalation and destruction across the region.” “The Iranian warning was unequiv-

ocal: If America targeted Iran’s infrastructure, they would retaliate by striking Gulf energy facilities and other regional targets,” one Gulf source said. The diplomatic campaign underscores how Iran is seeking to turn Gulf vulnerability into leverage, confronting regional governments with the prospect that any renewed U.S.-Iran confrontation could place the infrastructure underpinning their economies directly in the firing line. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman subsequently spoke with Trump, urging him to delay military action, return to negotiations, secure a ceasefire and pursue a diplomatic settlement, the senior diplomat and Gulf sources said. The warning was intended for every Gulf state, another Gulf source said, but was conveyed primarily through Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Iran has in recent years repaired ties with its Gulf neighbors, including former regional

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Atlantic storm season has quiet start

But this year’s hurricane cycle still carries risks

Dinah Voyles Pulver
USA TODAY

It’s the first week of August, and legions of people aren’t reflexively refreshing their screens to check the progress of a hurricane or tropical storm or studying the latest model predictions. No hurricane season has seen a slower start since 2009, according to Michael Lowry, a hurricane and storm surge expert with Miami television station Local 10. The lack of activity is a welcome gift for many, especially those still in recovery after storms pummeled the southeast in recent years. However, just because the 2026 hurricane season is off to a slow start doesn’t mean it can’t still produce a lot of misery. A few tropical weather models hint at a chance of storm activity in the Atlantic beginning in mid-August, but generally, hurricane scientists expect things to remain calm over the next couple of weeks. The long-term tropical outlook from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Climate Prediction Center shows no activity in the Atlantic region through Aug. 26. Meanwhile, Colorado State University’s regular August refresh to its forecast maintains its July prediction of a total of nine named storms, including four hurricanes. Of those four hurricanes, one is forecast to become a major Category 3 storm or higher. That means forecasters expect seven more named storms through the end of hurricane season on Nov. 30. So far in 2026, the National Hurricane Center has assigned names to only two tropical storms: Arthur and Bertha. Both formed in the Gulf, which can often be a wild card, even during an El Niño, USA TODAY previously reported. At the beginning of the season, NOAA predicted eight to 14 named storms, with winds of 39 mph or higher, with three to six becoming hurricanes, including one to three major hurricanes. NOAA has a 70% confidence in these ranges. An average season has 14 named storms with seven hurricanes, including three major hurricanes. In an average hurricane season, which starts June 1, the third named

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