

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 16, 2020

White House Coronavirus Task Force
Vice President Mike Pence, Chairman
15 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Vice President Pence,

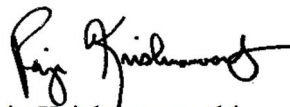
As Chair of the White House Coronavirus Task Force, you have a clear responsibility to provide information to the public based on the best available scientific and medical research. In the interest of safeguarding the credibility of the Task Force and its individual experts, I request that you immediately issue a public statement urging political campaigns to refrain from using statements from Task Force experts and other public health officials in advertisements that take their statements out of context or otherwise contribute to the spread of misinformation.

In October, the Trump campaign released an advertisement that included a clip of Dr. Anthony Fauci saying, "I can't imagine that anybody could be doing more," presenting the statement as if he was referring to President Trump when, according to Dr. Fauci, he was referring to "the efforts of federal public health officials." In response to the political advertisement, Dr. Fauci stated, "In my nearly five decades of public service, I have never publicly endorsed any political candidate."¹ Dr. Fauci has expressed his desire to remain an apolitical source of credible, unbiased information for the American people. The misleading use of Dr. Fauci in political advertisements is counterproductive to the crucial goal of mitigating the current crisis by providing the public with the most reliable available information.

My other concern with this advertisement lies in its false claim that the United States is already recovering from the pandemic. Conspiracy theories and misinformation campaigns regarding the pandemic, such as "miracle cures," are dangerous. False narratives regarding the pandemic have sown distrust among the public and threatened our pandemic response progress. As a result, it is estimated that only 50 percent of people currently plan to get the COVID-19 vaccine.²

The political advertisement featuring Dr. Fauci misconstrued his comments and dangerously politicized an unbiased civil servant. Regarding your position as Chair of the White House Coronavirus Task Force, I request that you issue a statement supporting the separation of public health officials from political activities.

Sincerely,



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

¹ CNN exclusive: Fauci says he was taken out of context in new Trump campaign ad touting coronavirus response. *CNN*. October 11, 2020. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/11/politics/fauci-trump-campaign-ad-out-of-context/index.html>

² The Risks of Misinformation and Vaccine Hesitancy within the Covid-19 Crisis. *Center for Strategic and International Studies*. September 4, 2020. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/risks-misinformation-and-vaccine-hesitancy-within-covid-19-crisis>