

POLITICS · Published March 30, 2022 1:30pm EDT

Republicans expose 'uncommon' CDC, teachers' union ties on COVID school reopening guidance in report

Republicans accuse Walensky of downplaying the degree to which the CDC departed from past practice to allow AFT to affect the policymaking process

By [Jessica Chasmar](#) | [Fox News](#)



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BeyondWords

EXCLUSIVE: Republican lawmakers who sit on the House Select Subcommittee on the [Coronavirus](#) Crisis are releasing a report Wednesday revealing a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) official's testimony claiming that the agency coordinated with [teachers'](#) unions at an extraordinary level in crafting its school reopening guidance, despite the agency's earlier claims that such coordination was routine and nonpolitical.

In the interim report, exclusively reviewed by Fox News Digital, Republicans wrote that emails between the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the [White House](#), and the CDC showed that the AFT's "cozy relationship with the [Biden](#) administration's political leadership at the CDC positioned the union to impose line-by-line edits" to the reopening guidance, despite the CDC's "past practice to keep draft guidance confidential."

[Fox News previously reported in October](#) on emails obtained by Americans for Public Trust that showed the AFT and the National Education Association, the two largest teachers' unions in the U.S., received a copy of the guidance before the CDC released it to the public.

TEACHERS UNION INFLUENCED LAST-MINUTE CDC SCHOOL GUIDANCE RECEIVED COPIES BEFORE PUBLIC RELEASE, EMAILS SHOW

On Feb. 11, 2021 one day before the CDC publicly posted the guidance, AFT's senior director of health issues, Kelly Trautner, emailed CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky asking her to insert the line: "In the event high-community transmission results from a new variant of SARS-CoV-2, a new update of these guidelines may be necessary."



Rochelle Walensky, Director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), speaks during a Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee hearing in Washington, D.C., U.S., on Tuesday, Jan. 11, 2022. (Photographer: Shawn

The emails revealed that Walensky forwarded the email to Dr. Henry Walke, director of the CDC's Center for Preparedness and Response, who then revised the guidance in accordance with AFT's request.

The emails also revealed that CDC officials coordinated an early release of the final guidance to the AFT before releasing it to the public.

The Republicans' report Wednesday says the Biden administration provided the teachers' unions "unprecedented access to the policymaking process for guidance on re-opening schools."

"Documents and testimony show, however, that Director Walensky downplayed the degree to which CDC departed from past practice to allow AFT to affect the policymaking process. In fact, CDC allowed AFT to insert language into the Operational Guidance that made it more likely schools across the country would remain closed after February 2021," says the report.

The report features new testimony from Walke in a Feb. 18, 2022 interview, saying the level with which the CDC coordinated with the teachers unions was "uncommon," and that the CDC does not typically share draft guidance outside the agency.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Rochelle Walensky gives her opening statement during the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions hearing on "Next Steps: The Road Ahead for the COVID-19 Response" on Capitol Hill in Washington, U.S., November 4, 2021. (REUTERS/Elizabeth Frantz)

The report states the Biden administration's lawyers would not allow Walke to answer questions pertaining to why the CDC allowed this level of coordination with the teachers' unions.

"When Republican staff asked Dr. Walke questions to that effect, a Biden Administration lawyer instructed him not to answer," says the report. "Because lawyers for the Biden Administration prevented a key witness from explaining why the CDC allowed AFT to write key portions of its guidance for re-opening schools, there are still several unanswered questions. This matter should be investigated further."

The AFT's edits were intended to make it more likely that schools would close to in-person learning, according to the Republicans' findings.

CDC TIGHTENED MASKING GUIDELINES AFTER THREATS FROM TEACHERS UNIONS, EMAILS SHOW

In a joint statement provided exclusively to Fox News Digital, Republican Reps. Steve Scalise and James Comer accused President Biden of rewarding one of his biggest political donors while millions of children suffered from school closures.

"The facts are clear: Biden's CDC overrode routine practice to allow a radical teachers union that donated millions of dollars to Democrat campaigns to bypass scientific norms and rewrite official agency guidance," Scalise and Comer wrote.

"The damaging edits by union bosses effectively kept thousands of schools shuttered across the country, locking millions of children out of their classrooms. The Biden Administration abandoned medical science and replaced it with political science to reward one of their largest donors, harming millions of children in the process. They bypassed the science to put union bosses ahead of children.

"Millions of Americans are still outraged at what these Washington Democrats put their children through, and all because union bosses demanded they keep schools closed longer," they continued.

"America's children are suffering, academically and mentally, because of the Biden Administration enabled school closures. Republicans will not rest until we uncover all the facts and hold everyone accountable who was involved in holding back millions of children from having equal opportunity to achieve the American Dream."



U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise (R-LA) delivers remarks during a Republican-led forum on the origins of the COVID-19 virus at the U.S. Capitol on June 29, 2021 in Washington, DC. (Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images)

The [CDC previously defended](#) its conversations with the unions as routine, saying, "As part of long-standing best practices, CDC has traditionally engaged with organizations and groups that are impacted by guidance and recommendations issued by the agency."

At the time of the guidance's release, Walensky [reportedly](#) said it was "free from political meddling."

The [AFT also previously defended](#) its role in shaping federal policy, saying, "we have been in regular touch with the agencies setting policy" that affect its 1.7 million members.

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In response to a request for comment, an AFT spokesperson told Fox News Digital that the CDC worked with multiple groups and organizations in crafting the guidance.

The CDC provided a statement to Fox News saying it sought input from 14 organizations "with an interest in the implementation and applicability of the guidance," including the AFT.

Other organizations included the National Education Association (NEA), the National Association of School Boards, and the National Association of State Boards of Education.

"These collaborative conversations resulted in nearly two-thirds of schools returning to full, in-person learning by May 2021, which was up from less than half in January 2021," the statement read. "Schools offering full, remote learning dropped from 23 percent in January 2021 to 2 percent

in May 2021, which demonstrated the confidence school districts had in the guidance to keep students and staff safely in classes."

Fox News' Kelly Laco and Joe Schoffstall contributed to this report.

Jessica Chasmar is a reporter for Fox News Digital. Story tips can be sent to Jessica.Chasmar@fox.com and on Twitter: [@JessicaChasmar](https://twitter.com/JessicaChasmar).



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What do you think?

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ddeadly1813 · 1 day ago

There was a time unions were needed, that time is long passed. Large organizations hold too much sway without the support of their members in many cases. Transparency is needed, but is in short supply.

Reply 👍 852 🗨️ 8

E elitesoldamericaout · 1 day ago

Unions are now like government. Top officials making big money off it's members while doing little or nothing for the people that pay their salaries

Reply 👍 373 🗨️ 9

↩️ 11 replies

thoughtfulguy777777 · 1 day ago

The Plandemic was purely political theatre. Many of us pointed it out from the beginning and were called "conspiracy theorists". Well, what's it called when multiple people and entities combine their efforts for a nefarious common goal?

Reply  458  10

 20 replies

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H **hisson299** · 1 day ago ...

Since this involves billions of dollars of tax-payer money, this most certainly qualifies as not only collusion, but campaign finance crimes too. Those in turn reveal a RICO statute and cause for federal warrants to be issued. Where's the DOJ in all of this? If I collude with a federal agency, eith...[See more](#)

Reply  155  2

P **Packatak** · 1 day ago ...

In case you missed it, the federal justice agencies are also in serious trouble for not doing their jobs.

They all worked together

Reply  38  1

G **Gunther871** · 1 day ago ...

Justice? Doesn't exist anymore in this country.

Reply  27 

 2 replies

 Show 4 more replies

s **Sunday870** · 1 day ago ...

People often forget that public schools/teachers unions are government funded and have become another entitled bloated government agency that should be working for that taxpayers/students but it seems the taxpayers are working for the public schools and teachers unions. Decades ago the CDC morphed ...[See more](#)

Reply  367  3

J **jimmyboy931** · 1 day ago ...

Time to dissolve the school tax, misrepresented and misused. USA is ranked 14th in the world in education. Equal taxation with equal representation, school vouchers, parent groups etc..is a start.

Reply  107  2

 3 replies

rome2 · 1 day ago ...

School, and other, unions are also a money laundering method for the DNC...tax payers to schools, schools to unions, unions to Dems.

3 replies
Reply 106 4

Show 16 more replies

s **Soldierfromthesky** · 1 day ago

I feel that unions have had their time. They were important in the early years when the federal government did not have laws protecting employees from harmful work conditions. Now the government has a million laws protecting employees and the unions have outlived their usefulness. They are nothing...**See more**

Reply 183 4

T **Tomcats937** · 1 day ago

Couldn't agree more. And like so many groups they create their own importance. One of the good things to come out of the pandemic, imo, is how powerful the school unions are and what they are teaching our children. They woke up the sleeping giants...mom and dad. Do they think they have more influence...**See more**

Reply 23 4

2 replies

T **TwolfBySea423** · 1 day ago

My dad was big on worker's unions, and was a teamster himself his entire life. He always told me unions are why the US leads the world in production. In turn, I joined a carpenter's union. All I did was pay dues. There was never any decent union work available because the union bosses would give th...**See more**

Reply 29 1

Show 4 more replies

A **areaman103** · 1 day ago

It's become pretty obvious that the public education system is no longer about education. It needs to be completely dismantled and the people now in charge should be prohibited from working in education again.

Reply 360 2

L **libertyjefferson731** · 1 day ago

Truth. Broken system. I'm a former teacher and this cannot be fixed. Education in US started its downward spiral in the late 60s and early 70s when the FED took over. You can't fix a machine when the designers who mucked it up continue to use the same malfunctioning parts to repair it.

Reply 39 4

2 replies

H **Henry-Navyveteran311** · 1 day ago

Your absolutely it's disgraceful that our children lack the education to succeed in life. The teacher union has placed there's political views over the need of the child. That's the reason Americans education system is third world and that's why third world are better than us.

Reply  65  2

 Show 8 more replies

luv5 · 1 day ago

The article can be summed up easily with this quote:

"Unpopular ideas can be silenced, and inconvenient facts kept dark, without the need for any official ban. ...veiled censorship ... Anyone who challenges the prevailing orthodoxy finds himself silenced with surprising effectiveness. A genuinely unfashionable opinion is almost never given a fair hearing, either in the popular press or in the highbrow periodicals."

— George Orwell,

Reply  272  1

MontauktheEnd · 1 day ago

India and China educate their children and graduate far more doctors and engineers than we do - they will soon out pace us in science.

Reply  69  2

 9 replies

M **meggie2** · 1 day ago

Amen to that! When I went to high school, there was a required reading list and Orwell's 1984 was on that list.....

Reply  13 

 1 reply

 Show 8 more replies

indpthinker · 1 day ago

CDC has a credibility problem and it will take decades to restore it. When Government weaponizes science it loses the message to the masses. I will be more focused on Academia Medicine in the future.

Reply  171  2

w **WakeupPeople848** · 1 day ago

I would question Academia Medicine as well.

Reply  23 

N notademocrap · 1 day ago

Same with DOJ, FBI and on and on....

Reply  78  1

 1 reply

 Show 7 more replies

T thomascollins · 1 day ago

Democrats politicize every government agency. They have done it with the FBI, CIA, IRS. PBS, CDC, EPS, HHS, right on down the list. It is what communists do. The Department of Education is completely owned by Teacher's unions as a result of the unions donations to the DNC. We need to dissolve the d...[See more](#)

Reply  155 

egor451 · 1 day ago

Without a doubt in my mind. Best comment to this article.

It will take years but the systematic disassembly and elimination of these corrupted institutions must start ASAP (most likely this January 2023)

It begins with the teachers unions. What they and the Democrat party apparatchiks have done to ou...[See more](#)

Reply  23  2

T trump4000 · 1 day ago

Thank you Donald Trump for giving us the vaccine in record time and saving us from the virus.

Reply  9  1

 Show 3 more replies

M mister.fox · 1 day ago

We're back in the green zone in my area.

WE WERE IN IN RED ZONE FOR MANY MONTHS,

i DON'T TRUST THE cdc FOR FUTURE ADVICE.

i BELIEVE THEY ARE A POLITICAL AGENCY AND NOT A SCIENTIFIC AGENCY,

Reply  234 

MontauktheEnd · 1 day ago

Kids in inner cities lost the most education from the pandemic. They can't read at grade level and their diplomas mean nothing when they can't finish college. We are firing Navy SEALs because they won't take the job and Biden is starting WWIII - makes no sense to me.

Reply  53 

 4 replies

nomormuzzies

· 1 day ago

Correct. I will never trust Cdc or any other government agency again. I will never follow lockdown or masking rules either. Remember that saying, "Hi, I'm from the government and I'm here to help". If you hear that phrase, RUN!

Reply  81  1

 3 replies

 Show 13 more replies

G gage · 1 day ago

...

The CDC previously defended its conversations with the unions as routine, saying, "As part of long-standing best practices, CDC has traditionally engaged with organizations and groups that are impacted by guidance and recommendations issued by the agency.

yeah I saw you guys meeting with all the res...[See more](#)

Reply  250 

L leadweights · 1 day ago

...

"The facts are clear: Biden's CDC overrode routine practice to allow a radical teachers union that donated millions of dollars to Democrat campaigns to bypass scientific norms and rewrite official agency guidance,"

Biden: It's pay to play man.... it's what I do..

Reply  42 

 1 reply

A areaman103 · 1 day ago

...

See that's the thing - NOBODY should ever submit to being impacted by the CDC Clown Show ever again. They're just part of Biden's 3-Ring Circus Scam.

Reply  113  1

 7 replies

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