

WHO Doesn't Deserve a Blank Check from US Taxpayers

At the end of May, President Trump [announced an end](#) to funding (and U.S. membership) for the beleaguered World Health Organization (WHO). Recently, the formal process of withdrawal began in earnest with the exit date [slated](#) for next July. But now, some members of Congress are looking for a legislative “solution” to keep approximately \$500 million in taxpayer funds flowing annually to the global bureaucracy.

The Hill [reports](#) that House Democrats' latest budget plans, “ensure funding to the World Health Organization and fund a slew of international organizations.” Given the WHO's bungled response to the pandemic, continued funding for the organization would amount to a blank check for bad behavior. A truly pro-public health budget would hold the WHO accountable for its actions. For those who support taxpayer dollars for global health initiatives, [more worthy organizations](#), such as [Doctors Without Borders](#), could be targeted. Patients simply cannot wait for the WHO to get its act together.

It's no surprise that Congressional Democrats aren't happy with President Trump's decision to defund the WHO. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) [called the move](#) senseless, dangerous, and illegal. Pelosi also declared that the policy will “be swiftly challenged.” But in fact, it is increasingly dangerous and senseless to continue propping up a bloated and unreliable global bureaucracy.

The WHO [infamously tweeted](#) on January 14 that Chinese authorities had seen “no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of the novel coronavirus” despite brave whistleblowers such as Wuhan physician Li Wenliang [sounding the alarm](#) about a disease that appeared to be spreading from patient to patient.

Preliminary investigations conducted by the Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of the novel [#coronavirus](#) (2019-nCoV) identified in [#Wuhan](#), [#China](#) . pic.twitter.com/Fnl5P877VG

– World Health Organization (WHO) (@WHO) [January 14, 2020](#)

For his “crime” of spreading awareness about the emerging illness, Li was detained by the Chinese authorities and [forced](#) to sign a statement pledging to refrain from further “unlawful acts.” The 34-year-old physician [died weeks later](#), leaving behind a pregnant wife and small child.

Despite China’s track-record in covering up the disease and [waiting two weeks](#) to allow a WHO advance team into the country to analyze cases, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus [praised](#) Chinese President Xi Jinping’s alleged political commitment, leadership, and transparency pertaining to the pandemic response.

Some researchers and academics [have tried to reason that](#) the organization has to do a delicate dance to elicit continued Chinese cooperation, but the organization’s actions go far beyond mere diplomacy. The WHO [continues to deny](#) Taiwan a seat at its emergency meetings, despite the Asian nation’s uniquely successful approach to containing the Coronavirus. Taiwan is a nation of more than 23 million people (comparable to Florida’s population) yet has [fewer than ten](#) COVID-19-related deaths. The island-nation contained the Coronavirus early on via a rigorous combination of travel screening and hospital infection control measures.

Clearly, Taiwan has a lot to bring to the table in explaining best practices to the rest of the world. Yet, New York University scholars Yu-Jie Chen and Jerome Cohen [note](#) that “due to the PRC’s great-power status, including its seat as a permanent UN Security Council member, Beijing has been able to

impose its 'One China' policy upon the world" at the expense of Taiwanese inclusion. That includes keeping Taiwan from WHO deliberations, even if that exclusion comes at the expense of public health.

And unsurprisingly, the WHO's systemically flawed response to the pandemic has led to basic inaccuracies in data reporting. In March, Oxford-based "Our World in Data" [announced](#) that they had to stop relying on WHO data because of repeated errors and problems with reporting consistencies. As a result, the data platform switched to European Center for Disease Control and Prevention data which publishes daily, accurate worldwide data about COVID-19.

Perhaps instead of writing a blank check for the WHO's inaccurate work, policymakers should beef up funding for sources proven to provide reliable information on the pandemic's spread.

Redirecting funding away from the WHO would also send a powerful message that the politicization of public health is harmful and will not be tolerated. The public deserves impartial information from organizations that aren't looking to score points with corrupt regimes or settle scores with countries they don't like.

Continuing to fund the WHO will only waste limited tax dollars and undermine public health at the expense of integrity and best practices.

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