

Let's honor Anthony Fauci and his 50 years of advancing public health

thehill.com/opinion/4699584-i-served-alongside-dr-fauci-lets-honor-him-and-his-50-years-of-advancing-public-health

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June 3, 2024



MEET THE PRESS — Pictured: Dr. Anthony Fauci appears on Meet the Press in Washington, D.C. Sunday, Nov. 27, 2022. — (Photo by: William B. Plowman/NBC via Getty Images)

Today, Dr. Anthony Fauci is testifying on Capitol Hill for the first time since leaving public service. As the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic and our nation prepares to hear from him, I felt called to share my experience working alongside him for years.

Having spent a career leading government agencies and universities supporting the U.S. public health infrastructure while promoting our public health agencies and their workforce dedicated to protecting our nation's health, I know the important role public health plays in our communities and around the world.

Following my eight years as the longest serving secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), a Washington Post article called me in 2001 "one of the most successful government managers of modern times." All of that success was due to having gifted leaders and world-class scientists and physicians like Dr. Fauci serving in government. Dr. Fauci is one of America's most

respected public servants and brilliant public health officials in the world. No award symbolizes the achievements of his more than 50 years of service than being awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by George W. Bush.

Working with Tony Fauci when he served as director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) was a great honor. He led a historic and unprecedented investment in science at NIAID and brought some of the most impactful scientific breakthroughs in the last century, including developing antiretroviral treatments for people living with HIV/AIDS throughout the world. Many of America's public health officials and agencies have worked to safeguard our nation's health and security from the threat of infectious diseases because of Dr. Fauci's leadership and vision.

Dr. Fauci has focused his entire career on instilling faith in the safety and effectiveness of vaccines and rebuilding the public's trust in the science. He leads efforts to focus on scientific data and scientific information to gain the public's trust. Dr. Fauci believes in following the core principles of science — honesty, transparency, flexibility and humility. Science evolves and at every turn we know there is more to learn.

ADVERTISING

Our nation's public health officials protected Americans from the unique COVID-19 virus during a once in a lifetime pandemic. As happens with science, these public health officials relied upon evolving scientific data and committed their lives to reducing the threat of COVID-19. Dr. Fauci is one of those public health officials.

Americans are devastated and frustrated about the loss of life and damage created by the pandemic. Weaponizing this anger against the nation's public health officials like Dr. Fauci, who has served our country honorably and faithfully for five decades, could have irreparable consequences for our nation and its respect by other countries.

We must not weaken our country's ability to prevent and prepare for future pandemics for our nation and the world. Let us commit to honoring our public health officials by working together constructively to protect the public health of our communities from future threats.

Donna Shalala is a former U.S. secretary of Health and Human Services. She is former Democratic member of Congress representing Florida's 27th District. Shalala led the University of Miami for over a decade, as well as the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Hunter College. She currently serves as interim president of The New School in New York City. Shalala received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President George W. Bush.
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