

Rand Paul spars with Dr. Fauci during Senate hearing: ‘I don’t think you’re the end-all’



Sen. Rand Paul. Screenshot/US Senate

- Sen. Rand Paul criticized Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation’s top infectious-disease expert, during a Senate hearing on Tuesday and argued that many states could loosen social-distancing guidelines without seeing new surges in coronavirus infections.
- “As much as I respect you, Dr. Fauci, I don’t think you’re the end-all,” Paul said, adding, “We can listen to your advice, but there are people on the other side saying there’s not going to be a surge.”
- Paul wants to reopen economies and schools across the country, despite Fauci’s warnings that doing so without proper mitigation systems in place would cause a resurgence.
- Fauci pushed back on Paul’s criticism, arguing that he had “never made myself out to be the end-all” and that he gave advice based on “the best scientific evidence” rather than economic or social concerns.

Sen. Rand Paul, a Kentucky Republican, criticized Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious-disease expert, during a Senate hearing on Tuesday, arguing that Fauci shouldn't be the "end-all" decision-maker when it comes to the US's coronavirus response.

Paul said there likely wouldn't be a surge in coronavirus cases as states loosen social-distancing guidelines and reopen businesses. He added that he hoped that those "who are predicting doom and gloom" would "admit that they were wrong if there isn't a surge."

Paul, who contracted the coronavirus last month, insisted that "outside of New England," the country had seen a "relatively benign course for this virus" — even though New York, which is not in New England, has long been the epicenter of the nation's outbreak.

"As much as I respect you, Dr. Fauci, I don't think you're the end-all," Paul said. "I don't think you're the one person that gets to make the decision. We can listen to your advice, but there are people on the other side saying there's not going to be a surge."

Fauci had earlier warned that there could be devastating resurgences if states and localities didn't heed federal guidelines for virus mitigation as they reopen.

Paul advocated reopening schools across the country in the fall, despite warnings from experts including Fauci.

Fauci pushed back on Paul's criticism, arguing that he gave advice based on scientific evidence rather than economic or social concerns.

"Senator Paul, thank you for your comments. I have never made myself out to be the end-all and only voice of this," Fauci said. "I'm a scientist, a physician, and a public-health official. I give advice according to the best scientific evidence."

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Fauci, who is helping lead the White House's coronavirus task force, said that both he and Paul should be "humble" in acknowledging that there's much they don't know about COVID-19's effects on people.

He mentioned the new, disturbing cases of children contracting an unknown inflammatory syndrome similar to Kawasaki disease and linked to COVID-19, adding that officials should not assume that children will be safe from the worst effects of the virus.

“We don’t know everything about this virus, and we really better be very careful, particularly when it comes to children,” he said, giving the example of “children presenting with COVID-19 who actually have a very strange inflammatory syndrome.”

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