

White House press briefing (via C-SPAN)

11/22/22

12:03:55 p.m.

1 minute

KAREN TRAVERS: This is your last appearance of the podium. You became a household name in large part because of your appearance is here at the early stages of COVID. What do you want Americans to remember about your service in government?

TONY FAUCI: Well, I think what I've accomplished in my 54 years at the NIH, and my 38 years as the Director of NIAID, although COVID is really, really very important, it is a fragment of the total 40 years that I've been doing and so, I'll let other people judge the value and not of my accomplishments. But what would I would like people to remember about what I've done is that every day, for all of those years, I've given it everything that I have. And I've never left anything on the field. So, if they want to remember me whether they judge, rightly or wrongly what I've done, I gave it all I got for many decades.

DIANA GLEBOVA: Dr. Fauci, what do you do in — [INAUDIBLE] — the early investigations into the origins of COVID?

(...)

12:07:13 p.m.

2 minutes and 21 seconds

APRIL RYAN: On the issue of COVID and mask-wearing, we are not talking about mask-wearing at this moment. Masks and the word masks have become a pejorative in some parts of this nation. Can you talk about the importance of mask-wearing as you're worried about the holidays and people gathering together. And then, on the gatherings for Thanksgiving and Christmas, what do you recommend for families who may have some who boosted, may have some who not boosted, may have some who have not had a vaccinate at all?

FAUCI: Well, I think your first and second question are related because what it really tells you is that we have multiple interventions and multiple actions we can take to protect ourselves, so there's a whole spectrum. Masking is one of them. Now, we're not talking about requirements or mandating. We're talking about, if you're in a situation and each individual person evaluates their own risk and that of the risk of their family members, for example. Like a person who's a 25-year-old living alone versus someone who has an elderly parent or grandparent or someone is immune compromised. First of all, everybody should be vaccinated and boosted with flu and with COVID, whether or not you wear a mask or another thing we shouldn't underestimate is testing, so when we're gathering, at a family gathering for Thanksgiving or Christmas or for any other holiday as we get into the winter, it makes sense that you might want to get a test that day before you come into a place in which you might be infected and spread it or other people who might be there. In order to protect. So, there's — masking is important, but you can count masking, vaccine, boosting, testing all of that is part of that spectrum of protecting yourself and

your family.

RYAN: But what do you say about the word mask now, being a pejorative in some communities.

FAUCI: No, shouldn't be. I mean you're absolutely right. I mean, I know sometimes when you walk in and you have a mask and nobody has a mask, you kind of feel guilty. You shouldn't feel guilty. You look terrific, right?

RYAN: Thank you. [REPORTERS LAUGH] I — I have no problem in here wearing a mask, thank you.

KARINE JEAN-PIERRE: Alright, we got to move on. Go ahead, Alex.

GLEBOVA: What are you going to do to —

RYAN: Don't be disrespectful!

GLEBOVA: — investigate the origins of COVID?

JEAN-PIERRE: You're being disrespectful.

GLEBOVA: What — what [INAUDIBLE]

JEAN-PIERRE: Hold on, hold on, hold on,

STEVEN NELSON: Can we get an answer, though? That's a major part of your —

JEAN-PIERRE: Hold on. Wait, I did not call on you, Steven. Go ahead. Alex, you're next.

(...)

12:12:43 p.m.

1 minute and 16 seconds

JEAN-PIERRE [TO DIAMOND]: Go ahead, Jeremy.

GLEBOVA: What have you done to —

JEREMY DIAMOND: Thanks, Dr. Fauci. Only — only 13 percent —

GLEBOVA: — [INAUDIBLE] the investigations into the origins of COVID?

DIAMOND: — got —

JEAN-PIERRE: Hold on a second. We have a process here. I am not calling out on people who

yell and you're being —

GLEBOVA: [INAUDIBLE]

JEAN-PIERRE: — you're being —

GLEBOVA: [INAUDIBLE]

JEAN-PIERRE: — disrespectful to your colleagues, and you're being disrespectful to our guests. I will not call on you if you yell. And also, you're taking time off the clock because Dr. Fauci has to leave in a couple minutes.

GLEBOVA: [INAUDIBLE]

JEAN-PIERRE: I'm done. I'm —

GLEBOVA: [INAUDIBLE]

JEAN-PIERRE: — not getting in a back-and-forth with you. Go ahead, Jeremy.

DIAMOND: Thanks, Dr. Fauci —

GLEBOVA: You didn't give an answer to the question.

SIMON ATEBA: But — but she's asking — she's asking a great question.

GLEBOVA: It's a valid question.

RYAN: You're not being [INAUDIBLE]

[REPORTERS SHOUTING]

JEAN-PIERRE: Go ahead, Jeremy. Go ahead, Jeremy.

[REPORTERS SHOUTING]

ATEBA [TO RYAN]: You asked your question. You should allow her to ask her question.

JEAN-PIERRE: Go ahead, Jeremy. Jeremy —

ATEBA: She's asking a valid question —

JEAN-PIERRE: — it's Jeremy — it's Jeremy —

ATEBA: — of Dr. Fauci about the origin of COVID-19.

JEAN-PIERRE: — it is not — it is not your turn.

[REPORTERS SHOUTING]

NELSON: Why are you still funding EcoHealth —

JEAN-PIERRE: It is not your turn.

NELSON: — Alliance, Dr. Fauci?

ATEBA: You — you call on —

RYAN: You're not being professional.

ATEBA: — the same people. That's not the thing.

NELSON: Why are they getting millions of dollars?

ATEBA: You — you can't have a press briefing. You need to call on people from across the room. She has a valid question. She's asking about the origin of COVID —

JEAN-PIERRE: I hear the question.

ATEBA: — and Dr. Fauci's the best person to answer that question.

JEAN-PIERRE: I hear your question, but we're not doing this the way you want it. This is disrespectful.

ATEBA: This isn't about me. This is about colleagues from here around the room.

JEAN-PIERRE: It is. I'm done. Simon, I'm done.

ATEBA: It's the same people.

JEAN-PIERRE: I'm — Simon, I'm done. I'm done with you right now.

ATEBA: She was just asking a valid question.

JEAN-PIERRE [TO DIAMOND]: Go ahead. [TO ATEBA] You're taking time away from your colleagues. [TO DIAMOND] Go ahead.

(...)

12:17:57 p.m.

4 minutes and 16 seconds

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE REPORTER: Dr. Fauci, if I could just ask you to reflect, on the — the early days of this pandemic and the mixed messages that we're coming out of, you know, this White House and how that affected people's trust. And how you're going to take that message for it in future pandemics? And the importance of trust. And you know, how you would advise Dr. Jha and his colleagues to — to emphasize that in future pandemics?

FAUCI: Sure. Well, there was really a difference early on in the first weeks to months of the outbreak because we believed we were dealing with truly a moving target and when you're dealing with things like, reporting and discussing with the press, making recommendations, making guidelines, you have to make it on the basis of the information that you have at that time. But what's happening is that we were not dealing with a static situation. We would do dealing with a dynamic situation. First we thought it was just an animal to human, didn't spread well, from human to human Then we found that it spread very well And then we found out that it spread enormously well, then we found out that it was aerosolized and we found out that 50 to 60 percent of the people who transmit it don't have any symptoms at all, so the recommendations that were based on what you knew in January, when you get to March, April and May, they will change. Understandably, that leads to a question on the part of the public is, why are they keep changing things? You know, a simple comparison and an analogy. In January, 2 plus 2 equals 4. In April, May, August September, 2 + 2 still equals 4. When you're dealing with an evolving outbreak, where the information you get changes from week to week and month to month. We've got to probably do a better job of when we talk to the public, explain, that this is a dynamic situation, that could change. I've said that from this podium multiple times. When we were talking about for example, do we need to do anything different now, when we had 15 cases, I said, but however, semicolon. this could change The only thing — people heard when they throw it back at you. Well, you said, we don't have to worry about anything. So you just got to make sure you always underscore the dynamic nature of what you're dealing with.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE REPORTER: But, Dr. Fauci, JUST — I'm sorry to contradict you, but there was some dubious advice coming out.

FAUCI: Excuse me?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE REPORTER: There was some dubious advice — some questionable medical advice coming out of noN-doctors —

FAUCI: Right.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE REPORTER:— at this podium. How do you think that affected the progress of this panel?

FAUCI: Well, if you remember — if you were around that at this podium, I contradicted those, which set off a whole series of things in series of things in my life. [REPORTERS LAUGH] But you know, yeah. I mean, we have to continue and we were just talking about this a little while ago. The way you counter misinformation, and disinformation is that to do whatever you can as often as you can, to provide, correct information. The people who have correct information, who

take science seriously, who don't have strange, way out theories about things, but who base, what they say on evidence and data need to speak up more because the other side that just keeps putting out misinformation and disinformation seems to be tireless in that effort and it's going to be very difficult.

MIKE MEMOLI: Dr. Fauci —

JEAN-PIERRE: Thank you, Dr. Fauci.

MEMOLI: — how are you preparing for —

JEAN-PIERRE: Thank you.

MEMOLI: — the likelihood —

JEAN-PIERRE: Thank you.

MEMOLI: — of aggressive oversight from House Republicans, the new majority, next year that they've been promising on some of these questions?

JEAN-PIERRE: Hold on one second. So, Dr. Jha is going to stay to take a couple more questions, but Dr. Fauci actually has to go. So, thank you so much, Dr. Fauci.

FAUCI: I could answer this question.

JEAN-PIERRE: You want to be the one to answer it?

FAUCI: Yeah.

JEAN-PIERRE: Okay. He — he says he'll answer it. [TO FAUCI] Okay, go ahead.

FAUCI: I'm going to do it quick.

JEAN-PIERRE [TO REPORTERS]: I'm just trying to keep him on time.

FAUCI: The answer is if there are oversight hearings, I absolutely will cooperate fully and testify before the Congress if asked. You may not know, but I have testified in front of congress a few hundred times — okay — over the last 40 years or so. So, I have no trouble testifying. We can defend and explain and stand by everything that we've said, so I have nothing to hide.

(...)

12:26:36 p.m.

3 minutes and 2 seconds

ROB CRILLY: I just want to pick up the point that Dr. Fauci was making about misinformation.

Under the stewardship of Elon Musk, Twitter seems to be welcoming back some people who spread COVID vaccine misinformation. Marjorie Taylor Greene's personal account is being reinstated, for example. Do you see that as a problem as you try and battle misinformation?

DR. ASHISH JHA: Well, Dr. Fauci said and this — it is something that we were speaking about earlier. The best way, I believe, to counter misinformation and disinformation is to spread good information, to spread in the science-based information, to have trusted voices. So, I started my comments by reminding everybody that America's physicians, like the real leaders of American medicine, the people you trust for your cancer care and your heart care, and your pediatrics care are out there telling you you need to go get a vaccine You can decide to trust America's physicians, or you can trust some random dude on Twitter. Like, those are your choices. But I think the key here is to get trusted voices out there spreading truth spreading science-based information and for journalists and for people who run platforms, I've — what I would say is you should be thinking about what your personal responsibility is. And do you want to be a source of misinformation and disinformation? That's up to — up to those individuals, but I think it's really important for us, for me to be spreading good information.

JEAN-PIERRE: Go ahead, Peter.

PETER DOOCY: So, Dr. Fauci said that it is not surprising there's this rebound effect with the flu this season. Why then does it seem like the country is caught so flat-footed by it?

JHA: What do you mean caught flat-footed by it?

DOOCY: Well, people in this country are struggling to get basic antibiotics and antivirals. Why?

JHA: So, I'm not sure what — what — so, we have plenty of Paxlovid. There's — I've not heard people struggling.

DOOCY: Not — not COVID. The flu and RSV.

JHA: So, I don't know what antivirals your thinking about for RSV. Not — there aren't any that I'm aware of. There is a monoclonal that's for very, very high-risk children. We have that. We have plenty of that, so I don't think anybody's struggling. I'm not aware of anybody struggling to get the monoclonal for high-risk children, immunocompromised children. But —

DOOCY: There's a CNN headline today.

JHA: Okay.

DOOCY: "Shortages of antivirals and antibiotics compound the stress of a rough season for viral illnesses in kids."

JHA: Again, I'd have to look at the specifics, what I would say is, we often see shortages of individual antibiotics. I'm not — I'm not aware of antivirals that are in shortage. The single most important thing that — that. People need to do to protect themselves in this moment where we

have a lot of flu, still have a decent amount of RSV, still got a good amount of COVID, the single most important thing we need to do is get vaccinated. It keeps you out of the hospital. It protects — it keeps you from getting particularly sick. We have plenty of flu vaccines. We have plenty of COVID vaccines, We have plenty of COVID antivirals. As I said, I think the country is ready. We're ready to support hospitals that are getting into trouble. We have been working with jurisdictions over the last month, meeting with them. If — if hospitals need help, we've offered that and we stand ready to help hospitals get through this moment.

(....)

12:39:28 p.m.

2 minutes and 13 seconds

CHRIS MEGERIAN: The other question I have is Republican Leader McCarthy is in El Paso today, reportedly going to make some announcement involving the Homeland Security secretary. How does the White House respond to criticism that it's lost control of the border? And, given the change in leadership at Customs and Border Protection, what changes as well as have in mind about how it wants to manage the flow of migrants from the south border?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, a couple of things. You know, I know I've heard that Mayorkas is — pardon me, that Kevin McCarthy's at the border. And the — the question that we have for Kevin McCarthy, who soon to be — who soon to be Speaker McCarthy, you know, what is — what is his plan? What is he doing to help the situation that we're seeing? What — what is his plan? He goes down there and he does a political stunt like many Republicans do that we have seen them do, but he actually is not putting forth a plan — a plan to help us, you know, deal with an issue that we're all seeing that you all are reporting. And, I mean, one of the things he can do is he can go to Texas, Senator, Ted Cruz or any members of the Republican caucus from Texas who voted against the President's request for record funding to support the hard-working men and women at the Department of Homeland Security. And whether they'll vote for it when it comes up again. This is — we have put a solution to this. We have said here are the ways that we can deal with this. The first day — on the President's first day in the White House, he put forth a comprehensive immigration plan because he knew how important it was to move forward with getting this done. But let me just say a couple of things and then I'll take — I'll take other questions. Here's the point, the president has done, he's secured record funding levels to DHS to support the more than 23,000 agents working day and night to secure the border under Secretary Mayorkas's leadership. He put forward, again, a comprehensive immigration bill on day one. We've partnered with Mexico and Guatemala to tackle the criminal smuggling networks preying on immigrants. Those efforts have already resulted in thousands of arrests, because of the work that this president has done. He bought 20 leaders together to collaboratively manage the immigration challenge impacting the whole Western Hemisphere. And we're stopping fentanyl before it even makes it to the streets of the United States, so we have a plan. We've been putting that forward. McCarthy has no plan. The Republican Party has no play. They do nothing except do political stunts.

MEGERIAN: So, is there a change in approach, though, because you're changing leadership at CPB? Does that signal that the administration's going to change course at all?

JEAN-PIERRE: We feel that we have a plan that we have put forward. We are happy to work with Republicans in a bipartisan way as the president has done for the past 20 months and 200 pieces — more than two hundred pieces of legislation has been able to be done in a bipartisan way signed into law, so this is something that can be done. Instead of doing political stunts and making about — making this about politics, you know, why don't [sic] Speaker McCarthy — soon-to-be Speaker McCarthy actually put some a plan before us — actually come to the table actually put some work into it?

(...)

1:02:52 p.m.

18 seconds

TOLUSE OLORUNNIPA: On a separate topic, we've learned through recent reporting about President's granddaughter living here at the White House, so I was wondering if you have any more details on whether she plans to continue to live here and whether any other family members or other people besides President and the First Lady live at the White House?

JEAN-PIERRE: I don't have any — anything further to share on that.

(...)

1:08:34 p.m.

2 minutes and 35 seconds

CRILLY: You said from the lectern that the wedding Naomi Biden and Peter will be a private one —

JEAN-PIERRE: Yeah.

CRILLY: — and that it would be closed to the media. Yet, I'm reading all about it and looking through pictures on the *Vogue* website. Can you just talk us through what happened there?

JEAN-PIERRE: So, first of all, let's level set here for a second. This was not a national security meeting. This was not an economic meeting. This was a young couple's wedding with their friends and family. This is what this was. This is what happened here on Saturday. So — and secondly, just to be clear, *Vogue* did not attend the wedding. They were not there, so what you're reading is inaccurate. They did not attend the wedding. As I told you all before, there was no press access at the wedding. It was a private family event and so — wait, you're asking me the question. Let me just lay this out for you and then I'm happy to take one follow-up and then we're going to go. The couple asked that their wedding events be closed to the media and it was. It was a closed event, a private family event. *Vogue* did a portrait shoot Thursday afternoon before the wedding in the Green Room. I would also remind you that many photos were released to the public on Saturday after the wedding to everyone. *Vogue* actually held their photos — they embargoed it until today so it would give ample time for the photos to be in the public sphere. And so, it is — it is inaccurate, completely wrong — it is not right to say it was open and to

suggest it was — a *Vogue* cover that was open to the press, it was not. And so, I just want to be very, very clear. What you're reading now is not accurate.

CRILLY: Yeah, I mean, I wasn't suggesting —

JEAN-PIERRE: No.

CRILLY: — that —

JEAN-PIERRE: That's what you just said.

CRILLY: — no, my question was you had said it was going to be a private wedding.

JEAN-PIERRE: It was.

CRILLY: I think — I mean, it seems as if you were saying the media would not be allowed in on the wedding day. But I think that those of us might think dressing up in a wedding dress, having a photo shoot, talking about the wedding is coverage of the wedding.

JEAN-PIERRE: The wedding was private. It was a private family affair. There was no press access to the wedding. We were very clear about that. There's no — no reason to mince our words here. The — the family and — and — the — and friends were invited to this family — to this wedding. It was a private event. It was a young couple's wedding. It was a joyous occasion. Again, the reports out there are inaccurate and false.