

# White House Removes Public Health Experts from Coronavirus Discussions

By [Michael Halpern](#)

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*The White House held dozens of meetings about coronavirus response that excluded government experts because [the discussions were unnecessarily classified](#) over the objections of **HHS Secretary Alex Azar**, reports Reuters. Experts were not just [barred from speaking openly](#) about what we knew about the emerging pandemic. Apparently, they weren't even allowed in the room.*

"It is not normal to classify discussions about a response to a public health crisis," an unnamed official from the Republican George W. Bush administration told the wire service. Yet this is President Trump's approach to nearly every public health and environmental threat: find some way to exclude the experts, stop them from speaking publicly, and make decisions in a vacuum. The deliberate sidelining of public health experts and science leads to bad policy, and ultimately, to more sickness and death.

Instead of prioritizing transparency and facts, the White House is choosing secrecy and confusing contradictions. This has likely allowed the coronavirus to spread more quickly and widely in the United States, with massive consequences for the entire US population and especially for those who contract the disease, plus all of the [collateral damage](#) that comes with this kind of large-scale disruption.

People are desperate for accurate and up-to-date information about this pandemic, and CDC experts are doing their best. But their work is in spite of the administration, not in concert with it.

Every day without full transparency means we are less prepared and more vulnerable. Scientists must be at the table to help slow the spread of coronavirus, and they should be able to share what they know without being subject to political control.

I urge all scientists to [add their signature to this letter](#) urging the White House to let us hear directly from the experts.

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**Michael Halpern** is an expert on political interference in science and solutions to reduce suppression, manipulation, and distortion of government science.

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