
Weekly COVID-19 Oversight & Enforcement Report

April 15, 2021

A. Congress

1. The House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis released documents showing President Trump’s political appointees [discussing](#) their efforts to exert influence over the CDC’s COVID-19 guidelines and reports to more closely align them with the President’s messaging and reopening strategy. After releasing these documents, the Select Subcommittee sent [letters](#) to three Trump Administration advisors seeking both additional documents and transcribed interviews regarding their roles in the Trump Administration’s pandemic response.
2. The Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis will hold a [hearing](#) on April 15 titled “Reaching the Light at the End of the Tunnel: A Science-Driven Approach to Swiftly and Safely Ending the Pandemic.” This will be the panel’s first hearing during which Biden Administration health officials testify. The witnesses scheduled are CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Dr. Anthony Fauci, and HHS Chief Science Officer Dr. David Kessler.
3. The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation Subcommittee on Tourism, Trade, and Export Promotion held its first [hearing](#) on April 13 entitled “The State of Travel and Tourism During COVID.” The hearing focused on the negative economic impact of the pandemic on travel and tourism in the United States. Stakeholders from the tourism and hospitality industry testified before the committee. In her [opening statement](#), Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV) said she “intend[s] to use this Subcommittee to find bipartisan pathways and solutions” to bring the tourism industry “back to its thriving pre-pandemic economic status.”

B. Executive Agencies

1. An indictment unsealed Wednesday [charged](#) a Colorado physician with stealing nearly \$300,000 in government funds from three different COVID-relief programs. According to court documents, he allegedly transferred approximately \$118,000 received under the Accelerated and Advance Payment Program (AAPP) and the Provider Relief Fund (PRF) from a medical clinic’s account into his personal bank account. This is the first time charges have been brought for AAPP fraud, and only the second indictment related to misuse of PRF money. The indictment further alleges that, following his termination from the clinic, he applied for a \$179,999 PPP loan on behalf of the medical practice, which he then directed into his personal bank account.
2. On April 9, President Biden [picked](#) Doug Parker to run OSHA. Parker has served as chief of California’s Division of Occupational Safety and Health, or Cal/OSHA, since 2019. Rep. Bobby

Scott (D-VA), Chair of the House Committee on Education and Labor, said Friday that Parker “is the right choice” to lead OSHA. “Doug Parker understands what it takes to protect workers on the job, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic,” Scott said. “With the appointment of this well-qualified safety and health expert, workers will have yet another strong ally in the Biden administration.”

3. OSHA [cited](#) the owner of Liberty Tax Service \$136,532 for failing to implement measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, specifically for prohibiting her employees and customers from wearing masks and social distancing. “This employer’s willful refusal to implement basic safeguards places her employees at an increased risk of contracting and spreading the coronavirus,” OSHA Regional Administrator Galen Blanton said in a statement. “Stopping the spread of this virus requires business’ support in implementing COVID-19 Prevention Programs and ensuring that staff and customers wear face coverings and maintain physical distance from each other.”

C. State Attorneys General

No updates this week

D. Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery (SIGPR)

1. On April 9, the Acting U.S. Attorney for the District of South Dakota [announced](#) that a Sioux Falls man had been indicted on a number of charges, including bank fraud, attempted bank fraud, and false statement in connection with loans under the PPP and the Main Street Lending Program. The press release noted that the SIGPR is assisting in the case.

E. Pandemic Recovery Accountability Committee (PRAC)

1. On April 9, PRAC Chair Michael Horowitz and Acting HHS Inspector General Christi Grimm co-authored [an article for CNN](#), offering recommendations for improving coronavirus tests. Their suggestions include investing in public-health infrastructure, incentive payment structures for labs to produce quick results, ensuring payments for testing are “economical,” and using “more and better multi-dimensional demographic data (including race and ethnicity)” to “inform policy decisions that target testing efforts and help further monitor public health in disproportionately impacted groups.”
2. On April 7, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency published its fiscal 2020 [annual report](#) to Congress and the president, which recapped PRAC’s work. “By leveraging the Council’s existing infrastructure, PRAC was able to launch operations almost immediately and initiate public reporting within 30 days via a new, purpose-built website [pandemicoversight.gov](#),” said the report. “At the close of FY20, the PRAC was already tracking nearly \$800 billion in dollars obligated or spent, across 20 agencies, 3.9 million recipients and multiple states. Dozens of instances of criminal activity involving millions of dollars in pandemic-related funding has also been identified and is being acted upon by PRAC-member [offices of inspector general].”