

International Opposition Grows To Biden Granting WHO Pandemic Powers

Description

[*Authored by Mark Tapscott via The Epoch Times*](#)

Opposition from African delegates to the 75th World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva, Switzerland, has forced hours of informal dickering on possible revisions to President Joe Biden's proposal to grant broad new powers to the World Health Organization (WHO) to deal with



[*The flag of the World Health*](#)

[*Organization \(WHO\) at their headquarters in Geneva on March 5, 2021. \(Fabrice Coffrini/AFP via Getty Images\)*](#)

As [previously reported](#) by The Epoch Times, Biden's 13 proposed amendments to the UN's International Health Regulations (IHR) that govern WHO operations **grant broad new powers to Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, a former Ethiopian government minister who has been in the role since 2017.**

Earlier this week, Tedros was confirmed for a second term by the assembly, which is WHO's decision-making body.

The United States provides more than \$150 million in assessed contributions to fund the organization and has given, on average, an additional \$262 million in annual voluntary funding since 2012.



[World Health Organization Director-](#)

[General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus attends a press conference at the WHO headquarters in Geneva, on July 3, 2020. \(Fabrice Coffrini/Pool/AFP via Getty Images\)](#)

Under the proposed amendments, the director-general could declare a public health emergency in any country regardless of whether local officials agree with the declaration.

Tedros also would be authorized to rely on evidence from sources other than those approved by the affected country as the basis of such a declaration.

Neither the organization's media office nor its counterpart at the U.S. [Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS) responded to The Epoch Times' request for comment.

The WHA's business is being conducted by two committees consisting of delegates from 194 member nations. The Biden proposals were first considered earlier this week by Committee A, presided over by Japanese delegate Hiroki Nakatani.

The assembly's process is to allow delegates to comment on and debate proposals, then if no objections are heard, the proposals are considered approved. But when the Biden proposals were first discussed earlier this week in Committee A's third session, objections were voiced by African delegates.

"The African region shares the view that the process should not be fast-tracked," Moses Keetile, deputy permanent secretary in Botswana's health ministry, reportedly [told](#) the assembly on behalf of the African region.

During May 25's [sixth meeting](#) of Committee A, Nakatani told the delegates that "progress was made during the informal discussions ... but further discussion seems to be needed" and he said talks would continue.

James Rogulski, an independent journalist and researcher, who is closely following the assembly [livestream](#), [said](#) "for some reason, they [assembly officials] could not reach a consensus, so it seems

like they are not even going to bring it to the floor,” pending the outcome of the informal negotiations.

Rogulski added that “what they have done is they are setting up another bureaucracy. They are going to have a working group for the [IHR]. They are going to be taking submissions from around the world for their ideas on how these things should be amended.



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[A logo is pictured outside a building](#)

[of the World Health Organization \(WHO\) during an executive board meeting on update on the coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) outbreak, in Geneva, Switzerland, April 6, 2021. \(REUTERS/Denis Balibouse/File Photo\)](#)

More details about the working group were contained in Tedros' [report](#) to the world assembly on “Strengthening WHO Preparedness for and Response to Health Emergencies,” including a recommendation for the international health agency to proceed as described by Rogulski.

The report said the new working group will “invite proposed amendments to be submitted by 30 Sept. 2022. All such proposed amendments to be communicated by the director-general to all state parties without delay; (d) request the [Working Group on International Health Regulations] WGIHR to convene its organizational meeting no later than 15 November 2022.”

Earlier this week, HHS assistant secretary for global affairs Loyce Pace [alluded](#) to the Biden amendments without acknowledging the necessity for the informal negotiations.

Pace told the assembly that **the Biden “administration believes in the need for strong global relationships to combat COVID-19 and to prevent and prepare for future health emergencies.”**

Pace said U.S. officials are “pleased” that the WHA is moving “to strengthen existing tools available to the WHO and to all member states.

“This includes strengthening the international health regulations from 2005 to clarify roles and responsibilities, increase transparency and accountability, share best practices, and communicate in real-time with our global partners.

“We are also committed to an intergovernmental negotiating body process that engages external stakeholders and develops an international instrument on pandemics that enables meaningful, inclusive action.”

But the Biden proposals have sparked a growing furor in the United States among critics who contend the amendments would amount to ceding of some portion of American sovereignty to WHO in the hands of a few million Americans and in excess of six



[President Joe Biden pauses while](#)

[speaking during a cabinet meeting in the Cabinet Room of the White House in Washington on Nov. 12, 2021. \(Drew Angerer/Getty Images\)](#)

Rep. Ralph Norman (R-S.C.), the first member of Congress to comment critically on the amendments, told The Epoch Times on May 26 that, “Of course the amendments should be withdrawn, but the bigger issue is how we got to this point in the first place. Why is this administration apparently willing to cede any authority to an international body, particularly the WHO?”

Norman added that “given the public outrage over this issue, you’d think we’d be hearing directly from the White House concerning the status of these amendments, or at least our delegation to the World Health Assembly. It makes you wonder what’s coming next.”

The Biden amendments are being defended by [FactCheck.org](https://factcheck.org/), a media organization at the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania that claims to “monitor the factual accuracy of what is said” by political and other figures on the issues of the day.

FactCheck.org said, “**conservatives in the United States falsely claim ... the amendments will threaten U.S. sovereignty.**”

The media organization then cited as an example the Biden proposal to delete an existing requirement that WHO consult with officials in a nation with a suspected pandemic before acting.

But FactCheck.org then noted that “the proposal eliminates the requirement of consulting and obtaining verification of those third-party reports before taking action, and adds a deadline for the WHO to seek verification of the third-party report.”

Critics of the amendment claim removing the organization’s requirement to consult with an affected nation before taking action—such as declaring a public health emergency in that country—amounts to a unilateral grant of power to the international health body.