

<https://www.wsj.com/opinion/rfk-jr-hhs-moves-to-restore-public-trust-in-vaccines-45495112>

OPINION COMMENTARY [Follow](#)

RFK Jr.: HHS Moves to Restore Public Trust in Vaccines

We're reconstituting an advisory committee to avoid conflicts of interest.

By Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

June 9, 2025 4:00 pm ET



A nurse holds a Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine in Miami, May 29. PHOTO: JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

Vaccines have become a divisive issue in American politics, but there is one thing all parties can agree on: The U.S. faces a crisis of public trust. Whether toward health agencies, pharmaceutical companies or vaccines themselves, public confidence is waning.

Some would try to explain this away by blaming misinformation or antiscience attitudes. To do so, however, ignores a history of conflicts of interest, persecution of dissidents, a lack of curiosity, and skewed science that has plagued the vaccine regulatory apparatus for decades.

That is why, under my direction, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is putting the restoration of public trust above any pro- or antivaccine agenda. The public must know that unbiased science guides the recommendations from our health agencies. This will ensure the American people receive the safest vaccines possible.

Today, we are taking a bold step in restoring public trust by totally reconstituting the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP). We are retiring the 17 current members of the committee, some of whom were last-minute appointees of the Biden administration. Without removing the current members, the current Trump administration would not have been able to appoint a majority of new members until 2028.

ACIP evaluates the safety, efficacy and clinical need of the nation's vaccines and passes its findings on to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The committee has been plagued with persistent conflicts of interest and has become little more than a rubber stamp for any vaccine. It has never recommended against a vaccine—even those later withdrawn for safety reasons. It has failed to scrutinize vaccine products given to babies and pregnant women. To make matters worse, the groups that inform ACIP meet behind closed doors, violating the legal and ethical principle of transparency crucial to maintaining public trust.

In 2000 the House issued the results of [an investigation](#) of ACIP and another vaccine advisory committee under the U.S. Food and Drug Administration—the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee. It found that enforcement of its conflict-of-interest rules was weak to nonexistent. Committee members regularly participated in deliberations and advocated products in which they had a financial stake. The CDC issued conflict-of-interest waivers to every committee member. Four out of eight ACIP members who voted in 1997 on guidelines for the Rotashield vaccine, subsequently withdrawn because of severe adverse events, had [financial ties](#) to pharmaceutical companies developing other rotavirus vaccines. A 2009 HHS inspector-general [report](#) echoed these findings. Few committee members completed full conflict-of-interest forms—97% of them had omissions. The CDC took no significant action to remedy the omissions.

These conflicts of interest persist. Most of ACIP's members have received substantial funding from pharmaceutical companies, including those marketing vaccines. The problem isn't necessarily that ACIP members are corrupt. Most likely aim to serve the public interest as they understand it. The problem is their immersion in a system of industry-aligned incentives and paradigms that enforce a narrow pro-industry orthodoxy. The new members won't directly work for the vaccine industry. They will

exercise independent judgment, refuse to serve as a rubber stamp, and foster a culture of critical inquiry—unafraid to ask hard questions.

A clean sweep is needed to re-establish public confidence in vaccine science. In the 1960s, the world sought guidance from America's health regulators, who had a reputation for integrity, scientific impartiality and zealous defense of patient welfare. Public trust has since collapsed, but we will earn it back.

Mr. Kennedy is secretary of health and human services.

Appeared in the June 10, 2025, print edition as 'HHS Moves to Restore Public Trust in Vaccines'.

Further Reading

HHS to Stop Recommending Routine Covid Shots for Children, Pregnant Women

How RFK Jr. Is Boosting 'Food Babe' and Other MAHA Acolytes

Trump's FDA Sends a Bullish Signal to Biotech

OPINION RFK Jr. Is Already Vindicating His Critics

Videos